The traffic in saints : the social & sexual economies of Old French hagiography

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The Social and Sexual Economies of Old French Hagiography

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Abstract

Social and sexual systems play a key role in medieval hagiography; this thesis explores the various ways in which these systems are implicated in the narrative and ideological functioning of Old French saints' lives of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The thesis divides into four chapters.

Chapter One examines hagiography's treatment of exchange and social contract. Drawing on theories of the gift in anthropological writing and in the work of thinkers such as Derrida, I argue that saints' lives privilege a particular form of exchange between the human and the divine exemplified by the saint's relationship to God; this relationship has its own economic character, a character that, in being based on a particular notion of the gift, both evokes and transforms the world of human economic activity.

Chapter Two investigates the implications of such transformations for the kinship networks that rely on human systems of exchange. Saints' lives raise the question of what kind of desire is possible in a system which lacks the temporal, emotional and economic boundaries of human social networks. Engaging with the work of Lacan and Butler on death and ethics, I suggest that saints' lives construct a sphere of ethical activity situated beyond the human social world, a sphere that is thereby associated with a form of death-in-life. Human kinship is thus seen in contrast to the forms of desire sanctioned within an alternative set of spiritual kin relations. Spiritual kinship, in being permanently in excess of human norms, may recuperate relations and desires that would be transgressive in human terms and thus redefines the law and its constitutive exclusions in line with a network of relationships that are located at (and just beyond) the limits of terrestrial kinship.

Chapter Three develops the suggestion that saints' lives transform human relationships through the recontextualisation and reinterpretation of such relationships within an alternative sphere of spiritual connections by considering how community is constituted in and by hagiographic literature. The chapter explores how communities might be represented by and involved in hagiographic texts through a form of what Althusser might term 'interpellation'. I investigate the possible effects of such processes both for medieval audiences and for modern readers, considering in connection with the work of Dinshaw, Agamben and Nancy how hagiography invites reflection on the nature of community and its constitution and conceptualisation in the present.

Chapter Four considers some of these conclusions in relation to three medieval collections containing saints' lives. This chapter looks at how community might be articulated intertextually, through certain combinations of texts. As well as considering how the ideological aims of these collections (and the saints' lives they contain) are served by such textual juxtapositions, I also explore how larger *recueils* might work against the interpellation of Christian community while simultaneously attempting to confirm the elements on which community is based.

Contents

Preface

It is perhaps appropriate that a thesis discussing relations of reciprocity, kinship and community should have so many debts to acknowledge to others. I am, firstly, enormously grateful to those people who have taken the time to read and comment on my work in an academic capacity. This thesis would never have been possible in its current form without the advice and unstinting support of my supervisor, Simon Gaunt; what is to be admired in this thesis is, to a large extent, due to him. I am grateful to Clare Lees, Patrick ffrench and Karen Pratt, who commented with insight and generosity on parts of this thesis that ranged from the embryonic to the unwieldy in my various review panels. For help in the early stages of my PhD, I should like to thank Jinty Nelson and Ian Short. I am indebted to Jocelyn Wogan-Browne for her assistance and encouragement at the beginning of my PhD and in its closing stages. For help particularly with the final chapter, I am grateful to the librarians at the British Library, the Bodleian Library and the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. My thanks also go to Ros Brown-Grant, without whose teaching and encouragement I would never have undertaken postgraduate study in the first place.

My work has benefited enormously from the seminars, conferences and reading groups I have attended both in London and elsewhere. The Graduate Forum run by the Institute for Romance Studies in London was a lifeline in the early stages of my PhD; it provided both a space for open discussion and a sense of community. Also of crucial importance were the seminars and reading groups in the French Department at King's College, which taught me much of what I have learnt about critical theory in the last three years. Both the medieval reading group at King's and the medieval French seminar in Cambridge have also been sources of inspiration to me. Finally, the roundtable discussion at the IMC 2003 in Leeds on feminism and queer theory helped to shape some of the ideas in my Conclusion as well as forcing me to rethink some of my arguments in earlier chapters; my thanks go to all those who contributed.

I am also immensely indebted to the colleagues and friends, whose insight (and incredulity) have shaped and sharpened many of the arguments that follow. Special thanks go to Bob Mills, whose intelligent comments on my ideas and readings of my work have often proved invaluable; I am grateful to him for being a challenging

interlocutor as well as a good friend. For sharing work, ideas and much more besides I would also like to thank Andrew Asibong, Claire Baty, Cary Howie, Peggy McCracken, Francesca Nicholson and Theo Riches. Simon Yarrow was more than generous in reading and commenting on Chapter Two.

I cannot even begin to thank the people closest to me who have supported me throughout the gestation of this piece of work. My parents, my sister, and my grandmother have helped me more than they realise, especially in the more difficult stages of writing up; I am, as ever, grateful to them for their confidence in me. Special thanks must also go to Guy Halsall, who has been closely involved with the writing of this thesis at almost every stage. I am particularly grateful to him for his patient encouragement and for taking the time to read (and re-read) parts of this thesis with scientific precision.

Finally, for economic support, I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Board for giving me the financial wherewithal to survive research in London and for funding conference attendance abroad. For additional grants for conference attendance, I would like to thank the French Department at King's, the Society for French Studies and the International Medieval Congress. The Thérèse Zadora Award enabled me to undertake research for the final part of my last chapter, by funding my trip to Paris.

List of Illustrations

Abbreviations

Agn	*The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages*, ed. by A. Joseph Denomy, Harvard Studies in Romance Languages, 13 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938)
Al	*La Vie de Saint Alexis*, ed. by Christopher Storey (Geneva: Droz, 1968)
AND	*An Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, ed. by Louise W. Stone, William Rothwell *et al.* (London: MHRA, 1977—92)
ANLB	M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963)
ANTS	Anglo-Norman Texts Society
Au	*La Vie de seint Auban: An Anglo-Norman Poem of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. by Arthur R. Harden, ANTS, 19 (Oxford, 1968)
BHL	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina
BL	British Library
BN	Bibliothèque nationale de France
Ca	*The Life of St Catherine, by Clemence of Barking*, ed. by William MacBain, ANTS, 18 (Oxford, 1964)
CFMA	Les Classiques français du Moyen Âge
Cri	*Gautier de Coinci, La Vie de Sainte Cristine*, ed. by Olivier Collet (Geneva: Droz, 1999)
Dean and Boulton	Dean, Ruth J. with the collaboration of Maureen B. M. Boulton, *Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts*, ANTS Occasional Publications Series, 3 (London, 1999)
Eu	'Trois Versions Inédites de la Légende de Saint Eustache en Vers Français', ed. by Holger Petersen-Dyggve, *Romania*, 48 (1922), 365—402
Euph	'La Vie de Sainte Euphrosine', ed. by Raymond T. Hill, *Romanic Review*, 10 (1919), 159—69 and 191—232
FEW	*Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch: Eine Darstellung des galloromanischen Sprachschatzes*, ed. by Walther von Wartburg, 25 vols (Bonn: Verlag, 1928—1970)
FMLS	*Forum for Modern Language Studies*
Foy	'Vie Anglo-Normande de Sainte Foy, par Simon de Walsingham', ed. by A. T. Baker, *Romania*, 66 (1940—41), 49—84
Ge	'La Vie de St Georges', in *Les Œuvres de Simund de Freine*, ed. by John E. Matzke, SATF (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), pp. 61—117

Godefroy	*Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du IXe au XVe siècle*, ed. by Frédéric Godefroy, 10 vols (Paris: Vieweg, 1880—1902)
Gr	*La Vie du Pape saint Grégoire: Huit Versions françaises de la légende du bon pécheur*, ed. by Hendrik Bastiaan Sol (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1977)
JA	*The Life of Saint John the Almsgiver*, ed. by Kenneth Urwin, ANTS, 38—39, 2 vols (London, 1980—81)
JH	*The Old French Prose Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller*, ed. by Carolyn T. Swan, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, 160 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977)
JMEMS	*Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*
Ju	'La Vie sainte Juliane', in '*Li ver del juïse' en fornfransk predikan*, ed. by Hugo von Feilitzen (Uppsala: Berling, 1883), Appendix I, pp. 1—24
Lau	*La Vie de Saint Laurent: An Anglo-Norman Poem of the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Delbert W. Russell, ANTS, 34 (London, 1976)
Ma	'An Anglo-Norman Legend of Saint Margaret', ed. by Karl Reichl, *Romania*, 96 (1975), 53—66
ME	*La Vie de Sainte Marie L'Egyptienne, Versions en Ancien et Moyen Français*, ed. by Peter F. Dembowski, Publications Romanes et Françaises, 144 (Geneva: Droz, 1977), pp. 25—111 (the *T* version)
MHRA	Modern Humanities Research Association
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
PUF	Presses Universitaires de France
Ri	*La Vie Seint Richard Evesque de Cycestre by Pierre d'Abernon of Fetcham*, ed. by D. W. Russell, ANTS, 51 (London, 1995)
RME	'Vie de Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne', in *Œuvres Complètes de Rutebeuf*, ed. by Julia Bastin and Edmond Faral, 2 vols (Paris: Picard, 1959—60), II (1960), pp. 9—59
RTP	Alison Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover: University Press of New England for Brown University Press, 1987)
SATF	Société des anciens textes français
SLWLC	Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c.1150—1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)
TL	*Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, ed. by Adolf Tobler and Erhard Lommatzsch, 10 vols to date (Berlin: Weidmann, 1925—)

Introduction

This thesis is about social and sexual economy in Old French vernacular hagiography. It is about the representation and constitution of forms of interaction and exchange that make up relationships of many different kinds, relationships of a social and sexual nature as well as more obviously 'imaginary' relationships between past and present, human and divine. Relationships are of course rarely innocent of questions of power and agency precisely because they emerge through forms of interaction that potentially inscribe social, economic and gender inequalities as well as endorsing or prohibiting certain forms of sexuality and desire. Indeed, my thesis is also about how, through their economic constitution, relationships are inflected by such factors; how, in other words, social, sexual and gender norms are filtered through, and possibly contested by, the constitution and re-constitution of connections to real or imaginary others. In being about the ways that relationships are created, mediated and maintained by their socio-economic underpinnings, this thesis is also fundamentally concerned with how relationships might be forged in other ways, by rethinking and possibly contesting the systems that produce them. It considers, most importantly, how the renegotiation of the socio-economic models that underwrite relational forms can produce alternative modes of connection and community, a project that I contend is axiomatic to Old French saints' lives.

French vernacular hagiography is particularly well suited to such an investigation for many reasons. For one, it is fundamentally concerned both with representing the relationships that make up human social existence and with reconceptualising those relationships in an alternative, spiritual context. Saints' lives not only depict their own versions of the human systems that mediate and produce social and affective connections, they also attempt to demonstrate the limitations of those systems as part of their own mediation of relations between the Christian community and God. In so doing, this body of literature is often surprisingly candid about questions of desire and the transgression of sexual as well as social norms, be it in the form of incest – as in the *Vie du Pape saint Grégoire* – or in the form of almost spiritually terminal nymphomania – as in the Life of Mary the Egyptian. This interest in transgressive desire and sexuality is, as I will suggest, linked to a more extensive effort in hagiography to think beyond the limits set by human social and sexual systems by demonstrating how spiritual economy and the relations it engenders are always in excess of human norms. Spiritual networks can recuperate the transgressions of saints

like Gregory and Mary precisely because these networks are themselves inherently overdetermined in human terms. Moreover, it is within this context of spiritual excess that saints' lives situate relationships of faith not only between saint and God, but also between the community and God. Faith and the connections that it underwrites are associated with a sphere that invokes, transforms and exceeds the economic frameworks of human society; it is within this sphere that relations of community emerge.

Thus, another reason for focusing on the economic matrices within which connections and alliances are produced in saints' lives is the importance of community in these texts. The interest that saints' lives have in thinking about the contexts in which relationships function emerges from the essential purpose of this literature as a vehicle of communication between Christian audiences on the one hand and God and the saints on the other. Hagiography's representational concern with social and sexual economy subtends a more practical – and communal – imperative. Rethinking human relationships in a spiritual context frequently forms an essential basis in this literature for the articulation of connections between the human community and its saintly counterpart. Saints' lives are thus interested in relational systems in more ways than one: they engage with social, sexual and economic relations on a representational level and also themselves attempt to create connections that might constitute or reaffirm community in the metatextual world.

If this thesis is partially concerned with considering such relationships in their textual and historical contexts, it is also an attempt to think about questions of community and connectivity in a much broader sense. If saints' lives are crucially concerned with relationships and their conditions of possibility, they are also interested in questions that are central to the connections that we as readers in the present make with texts from the past. Hagiography accords a particular, perhaps even a privileged, place to texts in the formation and reformation of the relationships it articulates. It also suggests how a textual negotiation with the past – that is, with sacred history and the saints that inhabit it – might have a part to play in the confirmation of relationships of community in the medieval present. In addition to exploring the various ways in which hagiographic texts may have mediated relations in their medieval settings, I also reflect in Chapter Three on how readings in the present might be implicated in such mediation as part of a participation in this literature, as well as a critical engagement with it. In considering the ways in which saints' lives produce relational models for their readers, I also therefore suggest how these texts might provide the means of articulating

relationships between past and present not only in contemporary medieval contexts but also as part of their modern critical reception.

Hagiography and Old French Literature

If vernacular hagiography is well adapted to an investigation of the kind I am proposing here, it is also an important corpus in its own right. The comparative neglect of saints' lives in French literary studies fails to reflect the significance of this literature in the high and late Middle Ages, when hagiography was one of the largest and most popular genres of medieval vernacular literature. Not counting the numerous versions of saints' lives that exist in prose, 240 texts survive from the period between the ninth and fourteenth centuries, in around 250 extant manuscripts, which recount the lives of some 101 saints. A substantial proportion of this corpus comes from Anglo-Norman England: over 100 of the 250 extant manuscripts containing saints' lives are of insular provenance.[1] Although a few examples of saints' lives in Old French appear prior to 1050 (notably the ninth-century *Séquence de sainte Eulalie* and the tenth-century *Vie de saint Léger*), most of this vernacular production emerges after that date. The efflorescence of Old French hagiography is traditionally thought to occur in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which, between them, witness the production of almost 140 saints' lives in verse.[2] This is a period when the vernacular production of hagiography is at the forefront of the development of a literature and literary technique in French. The twelfth century sees a predominance of Anglo-Norman saints' lives; poems from this period are generally translated from Latin prose into Old French verse.[3] By contrast, from the thirteenth century onwards, in saints' lives as elsewhere in Old French literature, prose is increasingly *de rigueur* as a compositional idiom.[4] The thirteenth century is also the period when continental French hagiography comes into its own, rivalling the early hagiographic productivity of the Anglo-Norman world.

Although a highly traditional corpus that maintained important links with its Latin sources, hagiography, like other genres of medieval literature, evolved with its public in matters of both style and form. The very existence of vernacular hagiography

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[1] Calin, *The French Tradition*, p. 88 and 'Saints' Stories', p. 24; Cazelles, *Le Corps de sainteté*, pp. 17—18; Aston, 'The Saint in Medieval Literature', p. xxvii.

[2] This figure includes 24 saints' lives for the 12th century and 114 for the 13th. Cazelles, *Le Corps de sainteté*, p. 17.

[3] On the characteristics of Anglo-Norman hagiography between 1130 and 1220, see Thiry-Stassin, 'L'Hagiographie en Anglo-Normand', pp. 410—18. See also *ANLB*, pp. 243—75. On Anglo-Norman hagiographic manuscripts in the 12th and 13th centuries, see Dean and Boulton, pp. 278—322.

[4] On the different purposes that verse and prose may have served, see Brunel-Lobrichon *et al.*, 'L'Hagiographie de langue française', p. 307.

attests to a growing need for literature in French as a language that was spoken – or at least understood – by significant, often socially or politically important sectors of society in a geographical area now roughly correlative with northern France,[5] England and parts of Belgium.[6] The importance of vernacular hagiography for the development of French as a *written* language as well as a spoken one thus emerges from its function as an ideological form with a direct relationship to a composite (and not necessarily clerically educated) Christian audience.[7] The engagement that saints' lives stage with their medieval readers and listeners is also reflected in the stylistic adaptations that vernacular hagiographers make to their Latin models. As Johannes Zaal has indicated, even the earliest examples of hagiographic literature in French introduce a number of stylistic features (such as direct modes of address) which are not present in the Latin sources on which the vernacular poems are based.[8] Moreover, these stylistic traits often align saints' lives with the *chanson de geste*, which, as others have pointed out, has much in common with hagiography in both formal and thematic terms.[9]

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, this stylistic innovation continues as saints' lives adapt to a changing literary climate and the altered tastes that go with that climate. Saints' lives of this period are often intensely conscious of their position within a developing literary tradition in the French vernacular. For instance, it is not uncommon to find references to texts from genres such as epic and romance in the prologues to hagiographic works, which usually claim that such non-religious literature should be seen as secondary to saints' lives themselves. Thus, Gautier de Coinci begins

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[5] This is with the notable exception of Brittany, which was not French speaking.

[6] The linguistic situation in Anglo-Norman England in particular is notoriously complicated. In England, French coexisted with Latin and English (which was more widespread as a spoken language than was French); French came into its own in the late 12th century as a written language associated with socially and politically powerful sectors of society. The evolution of Old French as a written language within the *langue d'oïl* region is perhaps more closely related to its spoken popularity (albeit in a variety of different dialects). However, by the 12th century Francien begins to predominate as a prestigious form of French associated with the royal and legal courts and with the capital as a centre of learning and spiritual authority (although Picard and Champenois are also important contestants). On the linguistic complexity of Anglo-Norman England (and how this inflected national identity) see Short, *'Tam Angli quam Franci'*. On written/oral languages in England, see Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, esp. pp. 197—223. On the development of continental French see Rickard, *A History of the French Language*, pp. 1—60; and Ayres-Bennett, *A History of the French Language Through Texts*, pp. 7—11.

[7] This audience was not necessarily uneducated; the rise of vernacular hagiography is due in large measure to the rise of a more leisured, wealthy, and educated lay aristocracy who acted as literary patrons. See, for example, Aston, 'The Saint in Medieval Literature'; and *SLWLC*.

[8] Zaal, divides these differences into sociological, psychological and religious categories: *'A Lei francesca'*, pp. 61—136 (on modes of address see pp. 73—77). See also Vitz, 'From the Oral to the Written'. In the Carolingian period, saints' lives were already being rewritten in the interests of improving their stylistic qualities. See Aigrain, *L'Hagiographie*, pp. 214—18. On the more general changes made to Latin models in French vernacular hagiography (in *langue d'oïl*), see Brunel-Lobrichon *et al.*, 'L'Hagiographie de langue française', pp. 302—3.

[9] See for example *RTP*, pp. 182—213 and Elliott, 'The Power of Discourse'; Suard, *La Chanson de geste*, pp. 7—9; and *ANLB*, p. 243.

his *Vie de sainte Cristine* by lamenting the fact that people these days would rather hear about how Renart betrayed Isengrin than listen to an edifying tale (Cri, ll. 9—12).[10] In the late thirteenth-century Life of St Barbara, the poet invites his audience to hear a new story about a beautiful *sainte damoiselle*, which he takes care to distinguish from stories about Ogier or Roland and Olivier.[11] The author of the Anglo-Norman Life of Richard of Chichester goes one further, contrasting the virtues of writing down a true story (*verai cunte*) that both gladdens the heart and aids its audience towards salvation with the evils of chivalric 'cunte de folie, | de fol amant et fole amie'; rather than going mad over such courtly tales, the community should instead, he claims, focus on 'la curtaisie | que fet as seinz en ceste vie' (Ri, ll. 1—36).[12]

Clemence of Barking's prologue to her Life of St Catherine of Alexandria focuses more obliquely on the relationship between the vernacular saint's life and literary developments taking place in other genres. Clemence's *Vie de sainte Catherine* is widely recognised as an accomplished and highly sophisticated text that borrows extensively from courtly literature.[13] Outlining why she has re-translated a previous, vernacular version of the *Vie*,[14] Clemence explains that a form of the story that was more pleasing to contemporary listeners was required: although the previous version was 'sulunc le tens bien ordené', men have since become more picky and the poem is held in low esteem as a result. Clemence therefore corrects the poem in order that the story might move with the times and people's changing tastes (Ca, ll. 29—46),[15] yet it should be noted that, despite the obvious qualities of her translation, she does not present this achievement in particularly glowing terms. The changes that Clemence makes to the story are the result of a degeneration in men's character that she anticipates will continue long after her poem has been written. The literary renewal of the saint's life is therefore synonymous with the developing moral corruption of the outside world rather than a bright new dawn of hagiographic poetic achievement.

Although it might justifiably be argued that Clemence is her own worst critic in this respect, her prologue touches on a tension at the heart of vernacular hagiography

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[10] 'Mieux aiment a oïr ce que l'ame compere, | si com Renart traï Ysengrin son compere | ou une grant oiseuse, s'un menestrier leur dit, | que de saint ne de sainte essample ne bon dit'. Gautier de Coinci, *Christine*, ed. by Collet.

[11] *Barbara*, ed. by Denomy, ll. 1—18.

[12] Pierre d'Abernon, *Richard*, ed. by Russell.

[13] Batt, 'Clemence of Barking's Transformations of *Courtoisie*'; *SLWLC*, pp. 117 and 227—45; Robertson, 'Writing in the Textual Community'; MacBain, 'Anglo-Norman Women Hagiographers'.

[14] It is possible that the text to which Clemence is referring is a dramatised version of the Life, part of which is contained in Manchester, John Rylands University Library, MS French 6. The vernacular poem may of course simply have been lost. See Fawtier-Jones, 'Les Vies de Sainte Catherine', pp. 100—103. Cf. Meyer, 'Légendes', p. 342.

[15] Clemence of Barking, *Catherine*, ed. by MacBain.

between tradition and innovation. This is a tension fundamental to the hagiographic engagement with the past, both in the form of the genre's literary ancestry and in relation to its writing of history. The concern with formal and stylistic reformation exhibited by vernacular hagiography is, as Clemence suggests, inseparable from an interest in the renewal of traditional forms and subject matter that communicate the veracity of Christian history. The newness of vernacular hagiography thus needs to be seen in the context of its mediation between essentially unchanging universal 'truths' and the changing social and literary situations in which those truths were to be communicated. Indeed, it is largely as a result of this concern with the universal that saints' lives rely on subject matter and narrative structures that are unapologetically predictable, formulaic and antique. On the level of subject matter, vernacular saints' lives of the high Middle Ages usually choose to relate the life and death of early Christian holy-men and -women as opposed to contemporary saints. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the focus of saints' lives tends to be on Eastern saints of the early Christian era, although important exceptions to this rule include the Lives of Thomas Becket, Elizabeth of Hungary, Dominic and Francis of Assisi.[16] In matters of form as well as content saints' lives are notoriously conservative; as Duncan Robertson points out, 'saints imitate each other, consciously as well as unconsciously imitating Christ, and their lives therefore resemble each other, often to the point of carbon-copy reproduction'.[17]

It would appear that the combination of tradition and innovation that one conventionally finds in vernacular hagiography not only troubles writers like Clemence of Barking, however. Saints' lives have come in for criticism on both scores in modern critical appraisals of their literary worth. Those less generous than Robertson have suggested (with some justification) that the repetitiveness of saints' lives amounts, at best, to rather flat narrative technique and, at worst, results in uncritical plagiarism.[18] The literary borrowings that saints' lives make from other genres, particularly from the thirteenth century onwards, are frequently viewed with similar disdain. The fact that these texts openly admit that they are in competition with other genres through tacit stylistic appropriations and through references to popular, non-religious texts is seen as confirmation of the inferiority of hagiographic literature when compared to the rapidly

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[16] Cazelles, *Le Corps de sainteté*, p. 19.
[17] Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 25. On the traditional (often repetitive) structure of hagiography, see Delehaye, *Légendes*, pp. 22-35; and Boyer, 'An Attempt to Define the Typology of Medieval Hagiography'.
[18] Delehaye, *Passions*, pp. 183—235 and *Légendes*, pp. 12—56; Coleiro, 'St Jerome's Lives of the Hermits', p. 163—7.

developing corpus of profane vernacular literature. As seen in the prologue to the Life of Richard of Chichester, some saints' lives might be considered to protest too much when it comes to qualitative comparisons with epic and romance: even if they are not in fact qualitatively inferior, some saints' lives certainly seem to have an inferiority complex. By 1200, saints' lives are thus considered already to be in terminal literary decline, as 'worldly' poets take the lead and hagiographers trail helplessly behind them.[19]

There is, however, a danger of taking saints' lives too seriously when they claim to be drowning in the wake of non-religious literary achievements. While not diminishing the undoubted significance of non-religious literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, it should be remembered that saints' lives often make these complaints in a period when vernacular saints' lives are being circulated in greater quantities than ever before.[20] In this respect the supposed literary inferiority of vernacular hagiography for the periods both before and after 1200 needs to be seen from the point of view of medieval audiences. To be sure, much of this literature is predictably repetitive; yet, as Alison Goddard Elliott has suggested, this repetition may have been part of the pleasure of reading or hearing such stories.[21] To use a contemporary example, one might object that, if you've seen one American action movie, you've seen them all, yet this does not prevent these films from having huge popular appeal.[22] Moreover, this concern with tried-and-tested narrative structures and modes of expression is integral to genres such as romance, lyric and epic poetry as well as hagiography. From this perspective, the highly traditional and repetitive character of saints' lives was presumably seen as a quality in their favour, not as an inducement to protestations of literary *ennui*. In a similar vein, seen from the point of view of audience demand, the stylistic connection between saints' lives and other kinds of vernacular literature potentially provides evidence of their popular appeal as much as it testifies to literary decline. Although the romance tendencies of hagiography are often lamented as evidence of the inferior quality of saints' lives vis-à-vis secular literature, it is perhaps more accurate to view this literary borrowing as a continuation of an ongoing dialogue

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[19] I paraphrase Robertson: 'By 1200, "worldly" poets will in fact take the lead, and hagiographers will follow, borrowing matter and manner from the romances, as though to coöpt their literary idiom for edifying purposes.' *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 12. On the decline of hagiography, see Dembowski, 'Literary Problems'.

[20] See n. 2 above. It should be pointed out that this vernacular production does not diminish the number of Latin *Vitae* copied in the 12th and 13th centuries. See, for example, Bartlett, 'The Hagiography of Angevin England'.

[21] *RTP*, pp. 7—8.

[22] James Earl suggests in an unpublished doctoral dissertation that 'when you've read one saint's life you've read them all', cited by Elliott, *RTP*, p. 2.

with a public that had come to expect saints' lives to be innovative in matters of language and style.[23]

Popularity has of course never been a guarantee of quality. Indeed, my point is not that saints' lives are necessarily of superior literary merit compared to other contemporary medieval texts, simply that important aspects of hagiographic literature would be overlooked if they were judged on the basis of literary quality alone. Some of the most interesting features of hagiography are to be found in the way it insists on the permeability of the boundaries between things that might otherwise be thought of as separate, by drawing connections between divine and human, past and present – and, on a compositional level, between clergy and laity, learned and popular, history and literature – thereby enabling relations to emerge between them. This, indeed, is what constitutes much of the originality of this corpus.[24] As already suggested, such insistent transgression is intimately connected to the ideological function of this literature in its negotiation between communities of readers or listeners and their divine objects of worship. It is as a result of the connections they enable that saints' lives have a crucial function as textual mediators of individual and communal identity outside the narrative itself: a function that aligns them with what Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has termed 'medieval identity machines'.[25] The ideological and educational aims of saints' lives are, in turn, served by their literary and linguistic transformations,[26] allowing them to engage with their audiences in ways that might more effectively consolidate fundamental aspects of Christian community and belief. Even if they are not always well-written or entertaining from a modern point of view, the direct engagement that one finds in saints' lives with questions of Christian identity and its mediation means that such texts often provide a space in which the ideological relations between text and audience can be observed. These relations, as I will argue, also provide ways of considering questions of identity and community in modern as well as medieval contexts.

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[23] Cf. Dembowski, 'Literary Problems', pp. 119—21. On the possible influence of hagiography on romance see Legge, 'Anglo-Norman Hagiography and the Romances'. On the interweaving of the two genres in the 12th century, see Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, pp. 216—58.

[24] Critics who have worked on vernacular saints' lives often point out that the originality of these texts resides in the way they combine clerically mediated religious tradition with popular appeal in getting their message across. See, for example, Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*; Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*; and Laurent, *Plaire et édifier*. Cf. Delehaye, *Légendes*.

[25] Cohen uses the term to explore the permeability and hybridity of subjective embodiment in medieval texts. His thinking about identity in terms of possible bodies and identities can, I think, be applied to saints' lives (cf. Ch. 3 below). *Medieval Identity Machines*, esp. pp. xi—xxix.

[26] See for example, Delehaye's assertion that the rewriting of saints' lives is linked to their 'destination pratique': *Passions*, pp. 367—8; see also Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 11—14; and Laurent, *Plaire et édifier*, pp. 34—5.

Critical Approaches

Hagiography nonetheless remains something of an omission in modern criticism. Although many critics pay lip-service to the importance of saints' lives to medieval French literary history, vernacular hagiography is still in many respects a marginal genre. This may in part be due to its seemingly hybrid literary status when compared to other, critically more familiar, genres.[27] As noted above, hagiography seems to situate itself on a threshold between old and new: between past and present, tradition and innovation, old themes and new literary and linguistic forms. Partly because of this, saints' lives also usually fall somewhere between contemporary definitions of historical and literary genre; they are at once historical accounts and fictional concoctions, works of pseudo history and literary freaks.[28] Thus, although now regarded as central to the development of French literature, vernacular hagiography is still frequently overlooked by literary critics and, unlike other genres of medieval vernacular literature, has only recently begun to be examined from perspectives informed by critical theory.

A literary approach to Old French hagiography is itself a relatively recent phenomenon. Nonetheless, important contributions from scholars who have worked on this body of literature have demonstrated its critical interest from a literary point of view. It would serve little purpose to summarise all of this work here. Suffice to say that the contributions made by Dominica Legge, William MacBain, Evelyn Birge Vitz, Johannes Zaal, Karl Uitti, William Calin, D. W. Russell, Peter F. Dembowski, Brigitte Cazelles and Phyllis Johnson (among others) paved the way for much of the work currently being done on saints' lives in the field of medieval French studies. In the last decade or so, readings of hagiography from feminist perspectives have made a huge impact on the way that saints' lives are viewed, an impact that has been largely responsible for opening up hagiographic literature to new approaches. Although these developments have not taken place exclusively in relation to Old French material, critics in this field have often been at the forefront of such developments.[29] The work of scholars such as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Simon Gaunt has introduced new ways of

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[27] Dembowski, 'Literary Problems'; Laurent, *Plaire et édifier*, p. 19. See also Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 180—81; Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, pp. 6—7; Johnson and Cazelles, *Le Vain Siècle*, p. 16.

[28] Robertson suggests that saints' lives 'embody an interaction between literature and spirituality which continues to challenge scholarly research and critical conceptualization': *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 12. On the difficulties of defining (and studying) hagiography, see also Cazelles, *Le Corps de sainteté*, pp. 15—16; Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender*, pp. 3—17. For a useful summary of some of the problems of generic definition from a historian's point of view, see Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre'.

[29] See, for example, Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, pp. 21—41; Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 180—233. For Anglo-Norman, the contribution of Wogan-Browne has been significant: her work in the early 90s includes 'Saints' Lives and the Female Reader', 'The Virgin's Tale', and 'Chaste Bodies'.

thinking about saints' lives from feminist perspectives informed by anthropology and critical theory.[30] Important new studies of hagiography using psychoanalytic and queer theory are also beginning to emerge from both within and outside French studies.[31]

My debts to much of this work and the important questions that it has raised will be clear in what follows. Perhaps most crucially, recent work has served further to highlight some of the ways in which saints' lives are concerned with themes that are central to my analyses of saints' lives in the following chapters: namely, sexual politics and systems of exchange. As Zaal has argued, the emergence of a 'feudal' vocabulary referring to the roles and social practices of a medieval warrior class is a feature that comes into being with vernacular hagiography in the 'French' tradition.[32] More recently, critics have indicated how such reference to social systems might be explored from the point of view of hagiography's sexual politics.[33] In taking up the study of these themes, I examine how they inform both the narrative composition of Old French saints' lives and the engagement that these texts stage with their implied, metatextual audiences. That is, I consider how a representational ethos that emphasises social and sexual systems forms part of the ideological project of hagiographic texts in their mediation between the community, the saint and God, an ideological project that I argue might be engaged in the present as a means of mediating relations of a different kind between medieval readers and their modern – or postmodern – readers.

My analysis ranges across a variety of different texts, particularly in the first two chapters. Although pointing to some of the specific values of certain texts, I have tried as far as possible to draw links between texts from different periods, geographical areas and dialectical domains. Rather than classifying saints into types or treating male and female saints separately, I have attempted to juxtapose saints that are often considered to belong to discreet categories. I have accordingly discussed accounts of martyrdom alongside the lives of saints who achieve sanctity by other means. While remaining aware of distinctions between *passiones* and the lives of confessor saints,[34] I have

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[30] *SLWLC*; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 180—233.

[31] On psychoanalytic approaches to Old French material, see Kay, 'The Sublime Body of the Martyr' and *Courtly Contradictions*, pp. 216—258; for a reading outside the French corpus that makes use of Irigaray, see Ashton, *The Generation of Identity*. For a queer reading of the Old French *Vie de sainte Euphrosine*, see Gaunt 'Straight Minds/"Queer" Wishes'. For queer and/or psychoanalytic considerations of hagiographic material more generally see Mills, "Whatever you do is a Delight to Me!", 'A Man is Being Beaten', and 'Ecce Homo'; and Salih, 'Queering *Sponsalia Christi*'. I am grateful to Sarah Salih for forwarding a copy of this article to me before its publication.

[32] Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*, pp. 61—72.

[33] see above, n. 30.

[34] It is widely accepted that saints' lives fall into 2, roughly divided groups that correspond to evolving models of sanctity in the periods during and after the early Christian persecutions. The *passiones* and the lives of the confessor saints are distinguished by certain generic differences that, as Elliott has pointed out, may respectively associate them with epic and romance. See *RTP*, esp. pp. 1—76.

attempted to consider how the treatment of particular themes in hagiography cuts across such differences and is, in turn, inflected by them. My intention has not therefore been to give an account of the historical progression of hagiography as a literary corpus; in the first instance, I have tried to show how saints' lives demonstrate a consistent preoccupation with issues of social and sexual economy that underwrite their religious function. This attempt to read across texts, while remaining alert to the specificity of particular articulations of general themes, is a form of hermeneutic promiscuity that I believe is positively encouraged by manuscript collections such as those I examine in Chapter Four. This, indeed, is perhaps the one form of promiscuity that saints' lives *do* positively encourage and, as in saints' lives themselves (as well as the compilations that reproduce them), it has a certain function: namely, to provide a means of thinking inter- as well as intra-textually about the relationships between texts and communities, saints and God that are fundamental to this corpus.

Hagiographic texts can of course be immensely conservative; this is a factor that continually qualifies the arguments I make in what follows. Nevertheless, as I will suggest, vernacular saints' lives also have some remarkably radical and surprisingly queer moments, and they therefore open themselves to readings that might investigate and engage with these moments in unorthodox ways. Furthermore, saints' lives provide opportunities for the exploration of how narrative can negotiate between categories, identities and historical realities that might otherwise be considered discreet. This is not as banal as it may sound. For, in being aware of their status as mediators, saints' lives not only encourage an exploration of the ways in which texts might be implicated in processes of identity formation, but also invite an investigation of identities in process, as part of matrices of relations that might themselves be rethought and renegotiated. Hagiography thus potentially focuses attention on *means* rather than ends, on the spaces of potentiality where identities may dissolve as well as crystallise, where connections can be made and remade and where, as I will suggest, a queer form of communion with the past might therefore ultimately be thought.

Traffic in Saints' Lives

Finally, a word on how this study is organised. In the first part of this thesis, I explore the hagiographic depiction of economy, kinship and social contract; the second part considers more explicitly how such depictions might have a relational function for the communities that saints' lives address, both as this relates to medieval readers and also as this might have an impact on modern engagements with this literature.

The first chapter deals with the representation of exchange in hagiography and, more specifically, the significance of the depiction of the gift in saints' lives. As outlined at the beginning of this chapter, economy in its broadest sense refers to the systemic organisation of meaning and value in social contexts. Society is organised by reference to such organising systems, which, in turn, mediate the production and circulation of goods and the relationships founded upon their transmission. The work of anthropologists since Marcel Mauss suggests that economic organisation underwrites all forms of social interaction as well as the relational networks that this interaction establishes. Thus, the gift is not only a mode of exchange, it is also a social contract. Moreover, in regulating the transmission of women and goods between individuals and social groups, this form of exchange also has a far-reaching effect on the organisation of sexual behaviour through kinship and the institution of certain kinds of sexuality. The exchange of women through marriage is one of the most basic forms of the gift and, as such, determines the form that kinship networks take by inscribing as well as restricting certain types of sexual behaviour. Questions of economic interaction are thus linked to the organisation and regulation of social and sexual relations in important ways. Economic systems and the traffic that takes place within them are intimately bound to the forms that relationships take as well as the social and sexual norms that they inscribe.

Against this background, Chapter One explores how the gift in hagiography has a sacrificial function that gives it a particular economic value in spiritual contexts, a value that – even if not claimed by the saint who makes such gifts to God – is nonetheless a part of how the sacrificial gift is to be read. The repetition of such sacrificial gifts articulates the saint's acknowledgement of his or her prior belonging to God as a Christian subject and, in so doing, defines a sphere of economic (or, in Derridean terms, aneconomic) relations situated in contrast to more interested and ultimately futile economic relations in the human world. Precisely because the definition of such an economy requires acts of remissive giving that communicate the saint's absolute subjection to God, the sacrificial economy of saints' lives is intimately connected to the gendered positions of men and women in social networks. Although the gesture of sacrifice ultimately performs the same function as the terrestrial gift, the saint's self-donation is articulated through his or her renunciation of those things that determine gender identity in human society. Saints of both sexes thus not only move beyond human social networks, they also transcend the roles that such networks conventionally allocate to men and women.

In Chapter Two I consider the implications of this movement beyond human systems. Because saints surpass the human categories that define them as social beings, the spiritual dimension in which communication with God takes place is not simply a sphere in which material relations are inherently overdetermined, it is also a space in which social and sexual identities become unfixed. By entering a zone that is indifferent to human laws, the saint is situated outside the rules that govern all socio-economic behaviour, including those rules that establish the primacy of certain forms of sexual conduct and desire. I explore the implications of this by using the descriptions of Antigone in the work of Jacques Lacan and Judith Butler to consider further the relationships between kinship, death and desire in hagiography. The death-like spaces that both of these thinkers describe as positions beyond – or indifferent to – the law are compared to the liminal position of the saint, who undergoes a form of social death which places him or her in contact with God. Consideration is also given to a further implication of both Butler and Lacan's treatment of such spaces of symbolic death for questions of kinship: namely, that the normative function of human kinship is overcome (and re-established) by the embracing of a form of death-in-life that marks the boundaries of the socially acceptable. In line with such a claim, the saint's relation to God is construed as a form of alternative, inherently overdetermined kinship that replaces and redefines the saint's relationships in the human world. Human kinship and the forms of desire that it sanctions or condemns are lived by the saint from a position located outside their normative constraints, enabling a reconceptualisation of the meaning of kin relations from the point at which they reach their limit. This has two important implications: firstly, the saint's exile from human systems involves inhabiting a space indifferent to the categories that render gender and sexuality intelligible in mundane terms. Secondly, the saint's social 'death' is correlative to an intimacy with God which, although expressed in terms of kinship, refers to relations and desires that are always in excess of human norms. The layering of relationships and desires in the articulation of the saint's kinship with God therefore has, I shall argue, queer potential: it indicates a sphere in which desire eludes description in terms of sexual and social norms precisely because it is always in excess of human limits.

The possible connections between kinship, community and queer desire are taken up in Chapter Three, where I examine how, by providing a means of articulating one's relationship to God, this excessive model of kinship might subtend the depiction of community in saints' lives. The formation of community as a modality of Christian kinship is given particular attention in the first part of this chapter, which investigates

how such relations might be produced or consolidated through certain kinds of reading. The notion of community as a textual phenomenon that is both represented within the text and also potentially produced by such representations is discussed in relation to Brian Stock's concept of textual community, which provides a basis for considering community as a possible product of the text as well as a predicate for it. In the final sections of Chapter Three I suggest that, just as the saint's relationship to God situates him or her in a space where desire is always overdetermined, so the community's textual constitution depends on forms of desire that are directed at an object that eludes straightforward sexual classification precisely because that object is both composite and textually (or narratively) displaced. This, in turn, has implications for the way in which modern readings of medieval texts such as saints' lives might be thought about. Taking my cue from the work of Carolyn Dinshaw, Giorgio Agamben and Jean-Luc Nancy, I suggest that modern critical readings of saints' lives (as well as other kinds of medieval text) might be constitutive of queer community. That is, if queer community is considered in terms of a form of being together that emerges from the embrace of unactualised sexual indeterminacy as such, one might partially connect with this communal mode of being as it is articulated in saints' lives as a mode of interrupted participation in the communities of medieval texts.

In Chapter Four, the manuscript context for the forms of reading and identification explored in Chapter Three are investigated more fully. This final chapter considers how communities are interpellated by combinations of texts in medieval compilations containing saints' lives. Focusing my discussion on three different manuscripts, I consider the ways in which relations within and between the texts included in such collections might both address and imaginatively constitute certain types of community. The ideological foundations of constructions of community in individual texts are thus investigated in connection with possible intertextual conceptions of community. In addition to exploring how different manuscript compilations create textual spaces in which community might emerge, this chapter also considers how, in larger collections, the ideological basis of community and Christian subjecthood in particular texts might be undermined by a manuscript context with encyclopaedic tendencies. On the one hand, I thus examine how manuscript compilations might complement and reinforce the ideological strategies of saints' lives as vehicles of community formation by situating them within a larger conceptualisation of community filtered through a number of different texts. On the other hand, I consider how, in larger, more diverse collections, the construction of community that potentially

emerges from the mediation between the divine and the human worlds, between the universal and the particular, might be stretched to its limit.

My thesis is thus an attempt to understand the relational matrices that underpin the ideological content of hagiographic literature both in narrative terms and in terms of readership and reception. It also suggests how questions of gender and sexuality – particularly as these categories are tied to regulatory systems – are implicated in this content and the relationships that it mediates between text and context. Perhaps the single most important assumption of this thesis is that Old French hagiography is fundamentally concerned with social and sexual systems and, in turn, with desire as it is regulated through such systems. This, of course, could be said of many genres of medieval literature; in this sense, I am not claiming that hagiography is unique, simply that it accords a particular – possibly even a privileged – place to the depiction of social and sexual regimes and the desires that those regimes produce, regulate and police. I also contend that these representational preoccupations have a role to play in the way hagiography negotiates its historical and religious functions, particularly in the way it mediates between audience and saint, human and divine, past and present. The representational concern with social and sexual networks in saints' lives plays a significant role in the forging of relationships both within Christian community and between the community and God. The economic framework that saints' lives construct through their depiction of the gift, kinship and community is therefore intimately bound to the ideological workings of these texts as vehicles of community formation and confirmation.

In looking at the ways in which saints' lives engage with and construct certain relationships, I also venture a few of my own. On a very general level, this thesis suggests new relationships between vernacular saints' lives, manuscripts and critical theory. As noted in the previous section on critical approaches, studies of Old French hagiography have only rarely engaged with critical theory. My thesis is therefore one of only a handful of works that explore anthropological, psychoanalytic and queer theoretical/queer historical approaches to Old French hagiography. In so doing, I also draw connections between critical interpretations informed by such approaches and the manuscript contexts of vernacular saints' lives. These are contexts that often appear somewhat divorced from theoretical concerns in medieval manuscript studies. I therefore hope that this thesis will show how critical theory might illumine not only narrative structure and content (and attendant issues of history, audience and reception), but also matters that to date have received scant attention in studies of medieval

manuscripts. Finally, in thinking about the relationships of Old French hagiography, my thesis also suggests how saints' lives might provide an important model – even a privileged one – for the articulation of new sorts of relations with the past and its texts. I thereby consider how saints' lives might enable a reflection on the way that we (as critics) approach and relate to medieval texts not only as historical documents but also as vehicles of communication that might be dynamically engaged in the present.

1
The Gift

'Puis ke jeo fui de funz levée,
E en le nun Deu baptizée,
A Jhesu del tut me rendi
Ke pur nus tuz la mort suffri,
A Jhesu Crist, le fiz Marie
Ke cele terre ad an baillie;
A li me doinz, a li me rend
A li auke devotement.'
(Foy, ll. 293—300)

'Mei ai en sacrefise osfert
A Deu, a qui sui donez,
Car esperit qu'est atriblez
Est sacrefise al Creator.'
(Lau, ll. 847—50)

'Pur [Adam] e sun lignage Deu du ciel tramist
Sun Fiuz, d'une pucele k'en terre char prist;
Force e estabilité me doinst il, cum cist
Ki poisantz est e moi cria e eu cors m'alme mist,
En vus met ma esperance e m'amur e delit
E a vus sacrifice me doins jo, Jesu Crist!'
(Au, ll. 658—63)[1]

The depiction of the processes in which gifts are awarded, received and reciprocated lays the foundations for one of the most pervasive and conceptually important motifs in the corpus of Old French hagiography: the gift.[2] Saints' lives depict their protagonists as both recipients of gifts from God and model donors in their own right, as exemplary individuals given over to the service of a higher authority and as powerful benefactors communicating divine gifts to a wider Christian community. Saints are frequently implicated in complex networks of relationships in which the gift is at once a form of sacrifice and an idiom of social and spiritual interaction between God, the saint and a human community of believers. In giving to God, the saint both acknowledges his or her indebtedness to a divine patron and claims that debt as part of an ongoing relationship of submission and exchange. This relationship makes the saint both the subject and the object of the gift; Foy, Lawrence and Alban articulate their dedication to God in terms of sacrificial donation, in terms of a 'givenness' that they confirm in their respective gifts of self. In turn, by praying to the saint, the Christian community

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[1] Simon of Walsingham, *Foy*, ed. by Baker; *Lawrence*, ed. by Russell; and Matthew Paris, *Alban*, ed. by Harden.

[2] The significance of the gift to medieval hagiography has been pointed out by others. See for example *SLWLC*, pp. 57—90. On Old English saints' lives, see Lees, *Tradition and Belief*, pp. 133—53.

attempts to harness the saint's powers of donation for itself, making the saint an intermediary in the transmission of gifts between God and his Christian subjects.

As the passages of text quoted above suggest, the primary gift in hagiographic literature – the gift which all other gifts anticipate – is the gift of self that the saint makes to God. The sacrificial nature of this gift is perhaps most apparent in the passions, where self-donation is clearly commensurate with self-sacrifice, yet all saints – regardless of whether or not they are martyrs – must submit themselves to God in gestures that express a similarly absolute form of self-donation. As the words of the three saints cited above imply, self-sacrifice is not just a matter of choosing one's own death: it is contingent upon the gesture of donation that makes that death a gift to God. What is striking about the gift as it is presented in hagiographic literature of this sort is therefore both its significance as a vehicle of sacrifice and the economic framework – that is, the system of exchange and value – within which this sacrifice occurs. The sacrificial quality of the saint's gift is always presented within the broader context of his or her relationship to God, a relationship that makes the gift a vehicle of self-donation and which gives it spiritual value within a mechanism of metaphysical exchange.

The claims made by Foy, Lawrence and Alban are predicated on this logic of donation in that they suggest that giving oneself to God is not simply an isolated act of sacrifice but a gesture that also takes place within a particular economic context. Yet this context is perhaps more complex than the notion of 'exchange' would allow in that what is described is an act of donation that invokes and confirms the effacement of the subject who performs that act. The sacrificial gift is made when the subject is already given to God, when he or she has already submitted to the claim made upon all subjects by God's gifts to man as creator, as sacrificial victim and as saviour. These saints not only give themselves to God, they return what they thereby assert was never theirs to give: as Foy's affirmation suggests, the saint's faith demands not only that she donate herself to God but also that she acknowledge this gift as the return of something that she only ever possessed as a gift from God in the first place.

In this sense, then, the physical sacrifices of martyrs such as Foy, Lawrence and Alban inscribe a particular economics of the gift also found in the lives of other saints. Foy's rather matter-of-fact claim that 'a li me doinz, a li me rend' is a simple yet incisive description of the dynamics of sacrifice and exchange that inform the representation of the gift in hagiographic literature more broadly. In these texts, the saint-protagonist usually renders his or her material and emotional self to God in a gesture of self-sacrifice and, in so doing, enters into an exchange that will eventually

guarantee his or her position as a saint. Thus, as this young virgin martyr suggests, to be a saint is to participate in a relationship in which the gift expresses ideological and affective affiliation in terms of sacrifice and the complex forms of donation and reciprocation that sacrifice inscribes.

Yet Foy's affirmation also raises a number of questions concerning the specificity of this discourse of the gift to the lives of male and female saints. Despite the obvious similarities between the ways in which Foy, Lawrence and Alban describe their respective acts of sacrifice, it should not be assumed that these acts remain unaffected by factors such as gender and sexuality. To assert that one has given oneself to the God to whom one already belongs is a statement that potentially takes on a different complexion according to whether the speaker is identified as male or female. It might be argued that Foy's dedication to a God of excellent lineage who holds the world in his protection invokes a model of heterosexual, 'matrimonial' desire seen in the lives of other female saints that is not reproduced in the claims made by Lawrence or Alban. Feminist scholars who have worked on medieval hagiography have repeatedly pointed out such differences. For instance, Gail Ashton's recent study of hagiographic texts argues that the voice of the female saint is always positioned at the margins of the controlling masculine discourse that defines her identity as saint and as woman; through her speech, Ashton suggests, the female saint is therefore able to subvert as well as to confirm patriarchal representations by usurping masculine authority in ways that male saints, presumably, cannot.[3]

The valuable work that has been done in this area indicates the importance of considering how the interface between sex, gender and power in saints' lives might have an impact on representational concerns. However, although differences of the kind pointed out by Ashton certainly need to be addressed, they should not be essentialised in advance. Appreciating the value of sexual difference in the sacrificial economy of saints' lives demands that the technical *similarities* of giving in this literature be taken into account; only then can the precise nature of such differences emerge. While it may be true that all saints must give themselves to God, the form that this gift takes and the context in which it must be read may differ substantially for the male and female members of this holy élite.[4]

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[3] Ashton, *The Generation of Identity*.

[4] The argument for considering questions of agency and representation in the lives of male and female saints in connection with gender politics is not new. However, as Wogan-Brown points out, feminist scholarship which has dealt with such issues has tended to focus on sexuality and the politics of representation in female saints' lives rather than considering the implication of the gift in issues of sexuality, power, and agency. See *SLWLC*. esp. pp. 57—90.

My own exploration of issues of gender and agency will be framed within a broader investigation of the way the gift works in hagiography. Before considering specific hagiographic texts, I will therefore discuss in some detail the theories of the gift that will inform my readings of saints' lives. Firstly, in the opening sections of this chapter, I will consider the Maussian notion of the gift, briefly discussing the impact of this theory on current debates in medieval history and how the gift might therefore be thought about in relation to medieval literature. I will then explore how Jacques Derrida's work on the gift might contribute to and complicate the anthropological and historical models of the gift that have emerged from Mauss's work. This discussion will help to establish the extent to which the gift – and particularly the sacrificial gift – can be thought of in economic terms and how this has a bearing on questions of gender and representation. Secondly, Sections 1.4.—1.6. will outline what might be termed a hagiographic economy of the gift: that is, the way in which gifts function within relations between the saint and the social world and the saint and God. This will provide an opportunity to think about how saints' lives might confirm or challenge theories of the gift such as that proposed by Derrida. Finally, using some of the insights of feminist anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, I will consider the relationship between the gift, gender and the sexual body, suggesting how the economic systems represented in hagiography inflect the meaning of male and female bodies in particular ways.

1.1. Mauss

The influence of Mauss's 'Essai sur le don' on anthropological, sociological and philosophical writing on the gift can hardly be overstated.[5] Mauss's work was groundbreaking in several respects, not least in being the first study of gift exchange to attempt to account for the systemic value of the gift in what he described as archaic societies. One of the most significant aspects of Mauss's study is his description of the gift as a *fait social total*: a phenomenon that governs almost every aspect of social and economic life. The gift, according to Mauss, involves three obligations: the first is the gift imperative itself, the second, the obligation to receive, and the third, the requirement that the gift be repaid. The reciprocal obligations that gift exchange thus creates between transactors mean that the transfer of gifts is never simply an exchange of material goods. Rather, the bonds created through this form of exchange underwrite networks of social relations in which it is not so much what is exchanged that is significant as the fact of exchange itself.

[5] Mauss, 'Essai sur le don'.

Mauss elaborates this point by arguing that gifts themselves represent parts of the persons engaged in exchange, being invested with a spirit (or *hau*) that makes them more than simply material objects transferred in an economic system.[6] The *hau* acts as the motivating force behind the obligatory circulation of gifts, creating bonds between persons and the objects that pertain to or behave as persons in gift exchange. Finally, Mauss argues that Western economic and legal systems have their origins in institutions that resemble those of so-called primitive societies of the gift. The residual morality of the gift that these origins have left in contemporary society thus harks back to a form of social interaction in which self interest was bound inexorably to that of the group or social unit and, Mauss suggests, conflicts with the relatively new industrial and commercial imperatives of modern culture.

Mauss's definition of the gift as a total social fact thus makes the gift a contract with both economic and symbolic value. Gift giving is, in Mauss's account, a political institution that draws together material, social and symbolic elements of cultural life. Moreover, as Marshall Sahlins points out, the gift contract as Mauss describes it is, by definition, a political contract based on consensus; exchange establishes structures of agreement that depend upon mutual obligation rather than on active forms of oppression.[7] For Mauss, gift economy is therefore associated with a kind of spiritual community in which individuals are bound to one another through the giving of personified gifts. The fact that gifts are considered to represent persons or parts of persons means that they not only ensure the confirmation of social agreements, but also tie participants in exchange to one another in a more personally affecting way. The fact that the gift is a total social fact suggests that this personal investment in and obligation towards others operates both within and between communities, establishing complex networks of relations in which individuals and groups alike all have a share.

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[6] Mauss's description of *hau* has since come in for criticism on a number of scores. I do not engage with these debates in any detail as many of these criticisms concern the finer points of anthropological terminology and are therefore only of secondary interest to my discussion. Apart from Lévi-Strauss's critique (which I mention later), some of the most influential discussions of Mauss's concept of *hau* have come from Firth (who argues that *hau* is a more passive spiritual principle than Mauss believed), Johansen (who suggests that *hau* is not a spiritual principle at all) and Sahlins (who argues that *hau* has both spiritual and secular connotations: thus, while Mauss was wrong on the spiritual specifics of the concept, he was right in a more profound sense). See Firth, *Economics of the New Zealand Maori*; Johansen, *The Maori and His Religion*; Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, pp. 149—83.

[7] This observation occurs in a discussion of the relationships between the work of Mauss and Hobbes. See Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, pp. 171—83.

1.2. The Gift Ideal

Mauss's claim that the gift is a mode of communal interaction that binds self interest to the interests of the community in ways that are fundamentally in tension with industrialised, commercial society has been criticised on the grounds that it exhibits a distorting idealism. As Jean François Lyotard has argued, this tendency to idealise the gift is not always entirely innocent; the mythical division it creates between Western capitalism and societies of the gift supports an imperialist – even racist – purism that defines rational capitalist society against its more primitive other.[8] Rather than simply dismissing this nostalgia for the gift as meaningless utopianism, it is therefore worth reflecting just a little on what this might mean for a consideration of the gift's medieval significance. Even if the gift is not considered primarily in culturally oppositional terms and associated instead with, say, historical difference or ethical purity, the question of alterity and self-definition remains a pertinent one.

This is a question that has not been altogether lost on historians. In line with Lyotard's argument, it has been suggested that the centrality of gift exchange in medieval culture is a fiction projected onto the 'feudal' era by modern scholars. In a recent article on early medieval economy, John Moreland articulates this position by describing the image of medieval economy supported by the work of historians such as Grierson and Duby as the infected product of a historical mind too reliant upon the insights of Mauss and anthropologists like him.[9] Moreland argues that traditional attitudes towards early medieval economy have focused too heavily on aristocratic forms of gift exchange, thereby failing to consider the totality of economic activity in the Middle Ages. This focus, suggests Moreland, has had the effect of supporting an ideology of primitivism in which medieval society is celebrated for those things that our own culture is considered to lack, instead of being described on its own terms.[10]

A reappraisal of the gift in medieval economy of the kind outlined by Moreland is part of a more widespread recent re-examination by social historians of the way in which social and economic relations were conducted both in this period and in the later Middle Ages. Moreland's analysis is supported by the work of anthropologists such as Maurice Godelier and Nicholas Thomas, who both argue for a more flexible conceptualisation of economic relations which is less reliant on the notion of the gift

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[8] Lyotard, *Économie libidinale*.
[9] Moreland, 'Concepts of the Early Medieval Economy'.
[10] Cf. Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, p. 10; and Zumthor, *Parler du Moyen Âge*, pp. 15—17.

derived from Mauss.[11] Debates of this kind are also related to the wider historical reconsideration of the definition of feudalism as a gift-based form of socio-political arrangement. For instance, arguing against conceptions of medieval socio-economics akin to those of Marc Bloch,[12] Susan Reynolds makes an argument similar to those of Moreland, Thomas and Godelier. Speaking of the modern concept of feudalism that has informed discussions of property law and of social and political relations in the medieval period, Reynolds contends that 'vassalage' and 'the fief' are idealised post-medieval constructions that are not fully supported by or reproduced within contemporary source material.[13] Her argument, like those of the historians already mentioned, is thus both a critique of a specific historical lexis and a re-examination of descriptions of economic and social interaction based upon the gift. For example, Reynolds challenges Weber's ideal type of the fief as a 'service tenement' that is granted in return for services rendered to the lord, claiming that the norms governing the rights and obligations of property were more variable than this model would suggest.[14] The modern concept of feudal property, which conventionally relies on certain ideals of reciprocity and gift giving, is thus exposed by Reynolds as a fiction that conforms less to contemporary medieval social practice than it does to modern (and later medieval) stereotypes of idealised economic interaction.

By contrast, what an examination of medieval French literature and culture would suggest is that, although many of the anachronisms that scholars such as these aim to explode are firmly attributed to post-medieval historiography, these anachronisms are not entirely without medieval foundations or correlatives. For instance, the importance of the gift as a privileged mode of communication between God and his Christian brethren in medieval religious ideologies and practices is well attested. From a theological perspective, the notion of the gift had a profound influence on many aspects of medieval Christian thought, from the development of the concept of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the doctrine of the Incarnation.[15] Stephen D. White's study

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[11] Godelier, *L'Énigme du don*; Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, p. 33.

[12] Bloch characterises feudalism in terms of the social institutions that created and regulated legal relationships of reciprocal obligation between men (usually between lord and vassal). His theory of two feudal ages suggests that the evolution of medieval society under the influence of – among other factors – a developing profit economy led to the eventual decline of feudalism as a social system. See Bloch, *Feudal Society*.

[13] Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*.

[14] Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, pp. 48—74.

[15] The doctrine of the gifts of the Holy Spirit concerned the sevenfold list of gifts describing the benevolent action of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification of the soul. Subsequent to the commentaries of Augustine and Gregory the Great, this doctrine had a profound influence on monastic (primarily Cistercian) thinkers such as St Bernard and theologians from Philip the Chancellor to Thomas Aquinas. From the 12th century onwards, the opposition of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the seven deadly sins became a topos in hagiographic literature and was used to organise other kinds of religious and didactic literature. See Lottin, *Psychologie et morale*; and Vauchez, *La Sainteté en Occident*.

of eleventh- and twelfth-century gifts to saints also testifies to the power the gift was supposed to have as a vehicle of communication between the spiritual, material and social worlds.[16] Moreover, the ideological importance of the gift in religious discourse is reflected in vernacular epic, lyric and romance texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which often similarly reproduce the idealising, sacrificial qualities that the gift has in religious contexts.[17]

In addition to this evidence, even Reynolds herself admits that ceremonies of homage and gift exchange and the hierarchies of land tenure with which they became associated had a symbolic value for the periods in which they developed, even if this was never what might be described as a social norm. The contaminating discrepancy between imaginary exemplar and social practice diagnosed in the work of these historians – especially as this discrepancy is related to the gift – is therefore not only a product of a post-medieval historiographical tradition but also a feature of certain kinds of medieval discourse. To be sure, the qualities nostalgically attached to the gift and to its social instantiations are most clearly apparent in texts from later periods (periods usually subsequent to the twelfth century). Yet these medieval representations are often no less naïvely idealising and no less supportive of ideologies of primitivism than their modern counterparts.

In relation to my discussion of the gift in hagiography, I would therefore like to emphasise that what might seem to be a paradoxical insistence on obsolete or impossible forms of social interaction in these texts is part of a discourse that potentially enhances the ideological value of the gift precisely *because* it is often considered to exceed tangible forms of sociality. The picture of economic activity painted by historians of the medieval period such as those I have mentioned would suggest that this is not a matter of literature reflecting an historical shift from a gift-based to a commodity-based economy. Although it has been suggested that the commercial revival

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[16] White's study demonstrates how the spiritual, material and social aspects of donation could intersect in the veneration of saints. See White, *Custom, Kinship, and Gifts to Saints*. Hudson makes a similar argument with respect to insular culture: see *Land, Law and Lordship*.

[17] As Kay points out in her study of the *chanson de geste*, the economic models underpinning the communities of epic and romance have often been taken as evidence of the more archaic quality of the French epic vis-à-vis romance. By contrast, Kay suggests that the alignment of epic and romance with gift and commodity economics respectively is a matter of ideological and generic positioning rather than literary chronology: the 'archaism' of the epic is a rhetorical position assumed through the invocation of an economic model deemed to belong to an earlier, less commercially self-interested period. In the lyric, the concept of the gift has a dual function: the poem is a medium through which the lover both offers his love (or life) as a gift to the lady and extends that gift to an implied male audience to whom he offers the poem in the expectation of enhancing his prestige. The lyric thus inscribes a complex structure of giving in which the amorous relationship postulated by the lover is both a medium for poetic self-sacrifice and a demand for recognition within an arena of (masculine) exchange. On epic and romance, see Kay, *The* Chansons de Geste *in the Age of Romance*, esp. pp. 2—21. On the lyric, see Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric*; Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*; and Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 122—79.

of the high Middle Ages gave rise to a commodity-based, profit economy that was a source of concern as well as new opportunity, gift giving did not die out in the twelfth century: in its ideal form, it may never have existed at all. Rather than being rooted in medieval economic shifts, the depiction of the gift in saints' lives is more plausibly connected to an ideological deployment of utopian fictions that has resonance even in modern critical discourse.[18] If, as certain historians suggest, fiction can blind us to the supposed truth of historical reality, the gift – with its sacrificial, nostalgic, idealising connotations – surely has a particular claim on our attention as one of the most pervasive and enduring fictions of the Middle Ages.

1.3. Derrida

Derrida's work similarly treats the gift as an ideal that always exceeds social reality. However, unlike Mauss's historiographical commentators, Derrida claims in *Donner le temps* that Mauss's 'Essai sur le don' is about everything but the gift. This is because, from Derrida's point of view, the gift is *anéconomique*: it is that which by its very nature must exist in disavowed relation to the circle of economic exchange. For Derrida, the conditions of possibility of the gift are also the conditions of its impossibility within economic and symbolic frameworks. In order for the gift to take place, a certain number of conditions must pertain: firstly, there must be a complete absence of reciprocity, secondly, both donor and recipient must fail to recognise the gift as a gift and, thirdly, this oversight must itself be forgotten. Any counter gift or act of recognition on the part of either *donateur* or *donataire* would therefore evacuate the gift of its meaning as such by sucking it back into the economic cycle that it must necessarily supersede. Derrida's position with regard to Mauss's study is therefore that this work describes precisely those semantic and structural systems that render the gift absent, speaking of everything but the *don* which Mauss seeks to define.[19]

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[18] Arguments have been made for seeing reflected in 12th- and 13th-century vernacular literature what has been characterised as a shift of economic power away from a feudal system to an urban, mercantile one. See, for example, Kellogg, *Medieval Artistry and Exchange*; and R. H. Bloch, 'Money, Metaphor, and the Mediation of Social Difference'.

[19] Baudrillard's notion of *échange symbolique* might be compared to Derrida's claims concerning the aneconomic gift. For Baudrillard, *l'échange symbolique* is associated with an order above that of semiotic culture, in which symbolic exchange replaces commodity exchange. Baudrillard claims that in contemporary capitalist society, the symbolic (which is associated with reciprocity and nature) no longer counts, yet still continues to haunt the field of value as a phantom. The only way of destroying the system is to displace it into the sphere of the symbolic, where it might be confounded with a gift of death to which it can respond only with its own death. In his later work, Baudrillard's concept of *l'échange impossible* as that which is situated at the limit of the economic system (as an always incomplete organisation of coherent value and meaning) similarly draws out the potential of the gift to inscribe and evacuate the economic principle on which it is based. See *L'Échange symbolique* and *L'Échange impossible*.

Derrida's work on the gift of death develops many of these themes as part of a logic of sacrifice. In 'Donner la mort', Derrida argues that sacrifice requires the annihilation of that which is utterly unique to the human individual, suggesting that what grounds human singularity most profoundly, and what therefore figures this quality most clearly, is death itself. One's own death, Derrida points out, is that which is non-transferrable: another might die *in my place* but nobody can die *for* me. Because it requires the assumption and renunciation of the very thing that defines the individual subject, sacrifice, as it is expressed through the gift of death, is therefore an expression of individual responsibility in its purest form. The gift of death thus creates the responsible human subject through a gesture that signals the annihilation of that subject: the singularity expressed by the individual's mortality is possessed only to be renounced as a gift.

In describing the economics of sacrifice, Derrida explains that – in much the same way as the gifts described in *Donner le temps* – the gift of death must escape all economics of exchange. True sacrifice, explains Derrida, is a gift 'sans économie', a gift that, in other words, exceeds relationships of exchange in being given without hope of return. Derrida's argument nonetheless allows for an economic approach to sacrifice in that although death may be a gift given 'sans espoir d'échange', the sacrificial gift does not thereby supersede all economics of exchange. Indeed, this is the implication of Derrida's suggestion that 'la réponse et donc la responsabilité risquent toujours ce qu'elles ne peuvent manquer d'appeler *en retour*, la récompense et la rétribution. Elles risquent l'échange qu'elles devraient à la fois attendre et ne pas escompter'.[20] Sacrifice must thus suspend the *expectation* of reciprocity in the donor but the performance of sacrifice nevertheless invokes the exchange foreclosed in the act itself.[21]

Derrida's work raises a number of questions pertinent to the treatment of the gift in other theoretical domains, most notably concerning the status of the gift as an object and its value as such within economic frameworks. The Derridean account of the gift points to the same discrepancy between the gift and its local manifestations currently being debated in historiographical contexts. For example, Derrida would agree with

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[20] Derrida, 'Donner la mort', p. 91.

[21] The gift's relationship to the economic systems it escapes is described elsewhere by Derrida, in a discussion with Jean-Luc Marion: 'The gift is totally foreign to the horizon of economy, ontology, knowledge, constantive statements, and theoretical determination and judgement. [...] I did not intend to simply give up the task of accounting for the gift, for what one calls the gift, not only in economy but even in Christian discourse. In the *Gift of Death*, I try to show the economy at work, the economic axiomatic at work, in some Christian texts. So I try to account for this and to say that this so-called circle, this economic circle, in order to circulate, in order to be put in motion, must correspond to a movement, a motion, a desire – whatever the name – a thought of the gift, which would not be exhausted by a phenomenological determination, by a scientific determination, by an economy', Derrida, 'On the Gift', pp. 59—60.

anthropologists such as Thomas and Godelier that Mauss's concept of the gift is misleading because it invokes the presence of an ostensibly unified economic category that is never completely represented in practice. Yet Derrida's point would be that the discrepancy between the abstract, economically unrealisable notion of the gift and the forms of exchange that invoke this notion while failing fully to inscribe it is precisely what is at issue in any description of gift exchange.

Derrida's notion of the gift is therefore distinct from that of Mauss and his historical critics. However, his argument applies to these descriptions of gift giving insofar as it suggests that all such discourse necessarily describes an economic absence. If Mauss's concept of the gift is unhelpful as a description of actual historical practice, it is because it attempts to invoke the ideal to which economic activity refers but to which it cannot correspond. In seeking to relativise descriptions of economic process, modern historical scholarship is more conscious of the distinction between the concept of the gift as a sociological fiction and the various forms of actual exchange, yet this reasserts what Derrida sees as the implicit divide in Mauss's work between the gift – the true gift, the aneconomic gift – and the processes that describe and represent it. Maintaining the concept of the gift as a theoretical tool or 'type' while denying its existence as an historical absolute is one of the most inadvertently Derridean moves in modern historiography.[22]

It is in this respect that Derrida's criticism of Mauss also potentially applies to his own work on the gift. For, Derrida's claim that the gift is an absent core of the various representations that recognise it as such means that, in much the same way as the social anthropology he critiques, his own theory describes and thereby absents the gift as an aneconomic phenomenon. This is reflected in the French titles of both of Derrida's major works on the gift – *Donner le temps* and *Donner la mort* – which speak not of the gift (*le don*) but of the act of donation (*donner*). Representing and recognising the term *donner* as an inscription of the process of donation would, according to Derrida's argument, nullify the status of either time (*le temps*) or death (*la mort*) as gifts: these gifts would become instead part of a symbolic economy in which they circulate as traces of absent and unrepresentable gestures of sacrifice.

Derrida's position on the gift represents an alternative approach to the opposition between commodity and gift that has informed much debate on exchange and the economic models it supports. Recently, scholars such as Maurice Bloch and

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[22] Thomas, *Entangled Objects*, pp. 33—34; Moreland, 'Concepts of the Early Medieval Economy', p. 31; Godelier, *L'Énigme du don*.

Jonathan Parry have insisted on the coexistence in socio-economic systems of forms of exchange that confuse categories of gift and commodity;[23] I have already cited some examples of work such as this being done in historical circles. This work suggests that gift and commodity are on an economic continuum, a continuum that holds the purely altruistic gift at one extreme and purely interested, utilitarian exchange at the other. Gift and commodity are therefore to be thought of less as opposites than as different, yet related and confusable, forms of socio-economic transaction. However, Derrida's work implies that the ideological distinction pointed out by Bloch and Parry between the altruism of the gift and the self-interestedness of the commodity corresponds to the difference between that which escapes economy and that which remains within it. The distinction to be made is therefore not that between commodity and gift but rather that between *exchange and gift*. This is not a distinction between different economies, but rather a distinction between economy and its absence.

In addition to recontextualising notions of commodity and gift, the distinction between the economic and the aneconomic made by Derrida potentially impacts upon issues of gender and sexuality that I will discuss in Section 1.6.. If the 'true' gift is – as Derrida suggests – beyond economy or symbolisation, it also, by definition, exists beyond the gendered positions of men and women within economic systems. This in itself invites a further interrogation of Derrida's description of the gift as an aneconomic phenomenon. For example, does this imply that the gift is entirely unrelated to economic concerns and attendant issues of gender politics? If not, what would the nature of the relationship between these things be? One of the primary questions that I will consider in my discussion of saints' lives is therefore how the gift either exceeds or invokes economic relations and whether those economic relations might be seen in gendered terms.

1.4. Sacrificial Economy in Saints' Lives

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, saints' lives are intimately concerned with economic structures. Although hagiographic literature often advocates repudiation of the material world, it remains concerned with economics in the broadest sense. Saints' lives privilege a particular form of exchange between the human and the divine that is exemplified by the saint's relationship to God. This relationship, as noted in connection with the *Vie de sainte Foy*, has its own economic character, a character that, in being based upon a notion of sacrifice akin to Derrida's aneconomic gift, is defined in contrast

[23] Bloch and Parry, *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, esp. p. 9.

to the world of human economic activity. However, as I will argue here, this does not mean that saints' lives unproblematically endorse Derrida's position. Through their depiction of the gift, hagiographic texts construct an alternative to the materiality of the terrestrial world that appropriates and redefines human economic activity along spiritual – but nonetheless economic – lines. The escape from the materiality of human economy in saints' lives therefore involves an engagement with those aspects of terrestrial society that shape and reproduce that world: in order to be superseded, the material must first be invoked and transformed. More to the point, the sacrificial gifts that saints offer to God thereby expose an economic structure that subtends the aneconomic gift. The function of the gift in hagiographic texts thus falls somewhere between Derridean aneconomics and the anthropological theory that Derrida critiques. The sacrificial economy in which the saint participates draws upon and subverts human, social economy; the gifts transmitted from the saint to God transcend, even negate, economic interaction as it is conventionally understood. Yet what might therefore be seen as an aneconomic gift performed in a spirit of sacrifice rather than exchange does not elude structures of reciprocity altogether. As we shall see, the gift's self-abnegating, often self-annihilating function is seen within an alternative economic context, a context which saturates its hagiographic depiction and the forms of reading that such a depiction routinely encourages.

1.4.1. Renunciation

One's relationship to God in medieval saints' lives is often a matter of good economic management, or, more accurately, of good economic *mismanagement*. As unstinting and often overly assiduous contributors to the cause of the divine, saints can't go far wrong in this respect. Forms of giving that would, under usual circumstances, result in financial or physical ruin yield outcomes that defy human expectations. The saint can give away everything that he or she possesses (and more) and still make a profit in both material and spiritual terms. In this sense, consistently 'spending' above one's means is perhaps the shrewdest investment that a saint can make: giving up everything in the name of God is usually a defining characteristic of the saint and provides a reliable means of being placed on the fast-track route to salvation. To describe economy in saints' lives in these terms is, of course, to be disingenuous. However, the point to be made here is twofold: it is often in exceeding the confines of human economies that saints demonstrate an allegiance to and faith in God and one of the primary means of achieving this in hagiography is through acts of renunciation that are construed as gifts.

The way in which renunciation in saints' lives operates in economic terms can be illustrated by reference to the version of the *Vie de saint Alexis* contained in the St Alban's Psalter.[24] The basic outline of this version of the story is relatively familiar: faced with the prospect of marriage, Alexis flees from his family on his wedding night in order to lead a life devoted to God. Having pursued his career as a saint for seventeen years, Alexis is recognised by God yet finds himself unequal to facing the public acclaim that inevitably comes with such recognition. As a result, the saint returns home, where he finds (with some satisfaction) that his parents no longer recognise him. Having been offered their charity, Alexis then spends the next seventeen years on a mattress under his parents' staircase, living off kitchen scraps and being persecuted by servants, until his death. Meanwhile, a divinely ordained quest for the saint has begun; Alexis's body is discovered under the stairs and publicly recognised as being that of the saint everyone is looking for. With a little encouragement from the Pope, Alexis's family, who are understandably baffled and upset by the whole affair, eventually come to venerate Alexis as a saint and are later reunited with him in heaven.

Alexis has been quite rightly described as 'a veritable athlete of asceticism and renunciation':[25] his acts of renunciation have a significant – although by no means an atypical – function in this text as illustrations of the saint's abstinence from worldly affairs and dedication to God. One of the earliest and most memorable examples of this in the narrative is figured in Alexis's departure on his wedding night, when the saint hands his wife a baldric and a ring before commending her to God and leaving to catch his boat.[26] It is worth noting that this passage uses the verb *comander* (to give, to commend) to describe both the transfer of the baldric and ring from Alexis to his bride and the saint's recommendation of his wife to God before his departure, thereby emphasising the act of donation and also implying a similarity in the way in which these things are given up.[27] Alexis thus renounces symbolically those things that define him as a husband and *seigneur* in a gesture that reverses the conventional dynamics of

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[24] I use Storey's edition. For details of the manuscript, see Dean and Boulton, pp. 279—80 (entry 505).

[25] Vitz, 'Narrative Analysis and the Quest for the Sacred Subject', p. 403. On Alexis and asceticism, see Johnson and Cazelles, *Le Vain Siècle*, pp. 42—46.

[26] In the St Alban's Psalter this scene is illuminated. See Pächt *et al.*, *The St Albans Psalter*. As Camille points out, text and image crucially inform one another here: the illuminations focus the reader's attention on the early part of the narrative (which is not the case in many illuminations of the Life). See Camille, 'Philological Iconoclasm', pp. 388—9.

[27] In the 13th-century versions, where this scene is more protracted, the simultaneous renunciation of bride and ring is modified. These versions still focus on renunciation, but the bride's role in giving up her husband is emphasised alongside that of Alexis. In *S*, the saint halves his ring and gives (*recoumander*) half to his bride; both parties later commend (*commander*) one another to God, an action that is emphasised four times (ll. 158; 297—320). In *M*, Alexis gives (*bailler*) half his ring to his bride and commends (*kemander*) her to the Virgin before leaving Rome, rejoicing at the fact he has been able to give up (*deguerpir*) his inheritance because she has given (*doigner*) him the power to serve God (ll. 143; 178—90). See *Alexis*, ed. by Elliott.

terrestrial gift transmission. Those objects that have been offered to Alexis as symbols of the social roles to which he is intended to accede – namely, the ring that would indicate his acceptance of a wife and the baldric that would signify his accession to the social (and material) position of a nobleman – are given up along with his bride.[28] This action both evinces the saint's refusal to participate in certain human relationships and also signals his devotion to a divine rather than an earthly lord. In other words, it is in giving up those things that indicate his involvement in human affairs that Alexis enters into an alternative economic arrangement, an arrangement that subsequently enables him to communicate with God.[29]

The sense that this interaction depends on precisely such acts of remissive piety is reinforced after Alexis's departure. Continuing the process of renunciation begun on his wedding night, the saint maintains his relationship to God through almsgiving and food deprivations that enable him to demonstrate his rejection of the world through acts of charity.[30] That these renunciations act as gifts indicating Alexis's loyalty to God is implicit in the poem's descriptions of these activities in terms of service. For example, in describing the passage of time after Alexis's flight from Rome, the poem asserts:

> [Alexis] Sert sun seinur par bone volentét:
> Ses enemis nel poeit anganer.
>
> Dis e seat anz, n'en fut nïent a dire,
> Penat sun cors el Damnedeu servise.
> Pur amistét ne d'ami ne d'amie,
> Ne pur honurs ki l'en fussent tramises,
> N'en volt turner, tant cum il ad a vivre.
> (Al, ll. 159—65)

The saint's service to God and the self-deprivations that he undertakes in Edessa are here explicitly connected: the hardships that poverty and fasting inflict on Alexis's body are not only performed by the saint 'par bone volentét', they are also effected 'el Damnedeu servise'.[31] However, unlike the feudal services Alexis would have rendered

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[28] Others have made similar points in arguing that the baldric and ring are signs of fidelity and personal commitment associated with the marriage ceremony. Mölk and Storey have suggested that the donation of these objects has an additional significance concerning Alexis's secular manhood. Mölk claims that, while the baldric possibly symbolises sexual purity, it also represents 'le renoncement aux honneurs et engagements séculiers' which Alexis's departure already connotes; Storey suggests that the baldric and ring are 'symboles de chevalerie et de mariage'. See Mölk, 'Saint Alexis et son épouse'; and *Alexis*, ed. by Storey, p. 12.

[29] On the way the Latin *Vita* makes Alexis's relationship to his bride part of his relationship to God, see Uitti, 'Paradigm, Legend, Meaning', pp. 281—3. For a comparison of the rejection of marriage in this text with the Old French Lives of St Gilles and St Evroul, see Pinder, 'The Intertextuality of Old French Saints' Lives'. On the saint's refusal of human paternity see Chiampi, 'The *Vie de saint Alexis* and the Weight of Paternity'.

[30] Rychner notes the verbal parallels between the saint's charity and service to God in Edessa and the service he performs for God in Rome, under his parents' staircase. 'Les Formes', p. 387.

[31] Zaal notes that Alexis's service to God in the vernacular poem is, unlike that in the Latin version, a form of *feudal* service: *'A Lei francesca'*, p. 64.

to an earthly lord, the saint's sufferings are offered to God ostensibly without the expectation of reward: Alexis expects neither worldly love nor honour in return for the sacrifices he makes. Moreover, the significance of *honurs* in Old French adds an additional, material dimension to this refusal of earthly reward, as it potentially refers both to honour as an abstract noun and to the titles, lands and privileges that one received as tokens of recognition from one's lord.[32] Alexis therefore refuses the recognition, status and material property that would ground his identity as a nobleman in favour of his service to God. The saint's self-deprivations are therefore acts of material renunciation in the broadest sense, involving the giving up of both tangible items of property and the forms of recognition and reward that the transmission of those items in a terrestrial economy would conventionally involve.

Alexis's withdrawal from worldly economy does not, however, imply a total absence of interactive exchange. Rather, the gifts he makes to God by giving up those objects that involve him too intimately in human society result in precisely the kind of recognition that Alexis rejects by choosing to serve God. However, the crucial difference here is that Alexis is awarded *God's* love and *God's* recognition in return for his services, rather than that of the human beings around him.[33] Indeed, when faced with the possibility of public recognition as 'l'ume Deu', Alexis decides to flee back to his parental home, suggesting that, in order for Alexis's dedication to God – and, by extension, for his sanctity – to be assured, the distinction between the saint's activity within terrestrial economy and his participation in heavenly economy must be maintained.[34]

The saint's remissive gifts thus operate in an alternative yet strikingly similar economic sphere to that which he has deliberately left behind in rejecting his social roles as a lord and husband. What distinguishes these two spheres from one another – and what also, paradoxically, connects them – is the nature of the symbolic currency that is used in each. In terrestrial contexts, gifts and services result in material reward and recognition (in the form of love, honour or gifts of land), whereas, in the spiritual economy into which Alexis is precipitated, worldly acquisition must deliberately be eschewed in order to ensure the transmission of non-material services and rewards. In

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[32] See the definition of *honor* in Godefroy, IV, p. 491; *onur* in the *AND*, p. 456; *onor* in TL, VI, pp. 1128—35; and *honos* in *FEW*, IV, pp. 465—6. See also Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*, pp. 64—5.

[33] The negative mirroring of the social world that the saint abandons in the eremitic life that he embraces is mentioned by Elliott: *RTP*, p. 92.

[34] A similar episode occurs in the *Vie de saint Gilles*, where Gilles fears that a miracle he performed while staying with a saintly hermit will earn him the latter's praise. Deciding that 'si jo requier los terrïen, | tut mun travail ne vaudra ren. | Pur ço ne ving jo mie ici, | ne ma grant terre ne guerpi!' (ll. 1435—38) the saint flees to the forest. See Guillaume de Berneville, *Gilles*, ed. by Laurent.

the case of the giving of tokens and – later on – the giving of alms, what this suggests is a triangulation of gift relations whereby objects passed from the saint to others act as gifts renounced in the human world, yet also operate as gifts to God. As such, human and divine economies are dynamically related in a way that maintains the tension between them: the services and gifts of the saint are made possible not by his removal from terrestrial economy but by the establishment of a negative relationship of the gift that places him between terrestrial and divine economies.[35]

Alexis is not exceptional in this respect: the tokens that he gives to his wife on the night of their wedding and his subsequent gifts of food and alms merely communicate in material form the renunciations that every saint must be seen to perform for God in the course of his or her Life. One might compare George's decision to spend (*despendre*) his considerable wealth as part of the service he undertakes to perform for God (Ge, ll. 109—16),[36] or the spectacular bonfire that Thaïs makes in the city centre of those possessions that she has bought through her prostitution.[37] While there are substantial differences in how these saints articulate their renunciation of the world, this renunciation conveys essentially the same message. The performance of renunciation is a form of self-donation in which saints voluntarily subject themselves to God. Thus, in renouncing the world, the saint expresses a dedication to his or her divine master that not only has terrestrial benefits but that, more importantly, will be rewarded after his or her death by the reciprocal conferral of the gift of salvation.

It should be stressed that what is significant about the negative relationship of the gift that the saint establishes with human economic systems is not the element of material sacrifice that often accompanies his or her rejection of the world but the gesture of the gift that lies behind it. Although, as illustrated by the *Vie de saint Alexis*, the saint's gifts imply sacrifice of material property (and of human society more generally), this sacrifice can only be construed as a form of service to God when performed in his name, as a gift from the saint to his divine master. The saint's relationship to God and the triangulation of economic relations that goes with it thus fundamentally depend on the perception of the gesture of the gift that lies behind his or her material renunciations.

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[35] It has been suggested by Little that the legend of Alexis in the 11th and 12th centuries introduces two new themes into the hagiographic repertoire of Western Europe: the voluntary renunciation of wealth and the adoption of a hitherto exclusively Eastern practice of religious mendicancy. *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy*, esp. pp. 40—41. See also Gieysztor, 'La Légende de saint Alexis en Occident'.

[36] This part of the poem plays upon the multiple meanings of this verb, which is used in the sense of 'to spend' but also, in the reflexive form, in the sense of 'to free oneself' (l. 116). In l. 94, *despendre* also means 'to forget'. Simund de Freine, *George*, ed. by Matzke. See the definitions of *despendre* in Godefroy, II, p. 627; *AND*, p. 174; and TL, II, pp. 1689—90.

[37] See the version of the Life dedicated to Henri d'Arci: *Thaïs*, ed. by Perman, ll. 53—60.

Indeed, in many cases the posthumous conception of the saint as donor or intercessor on behalf of the Christian community is grafted onto a prior construction of the saint as an example of precisely this kind of remissive generosity.[38]

This negative relation of the gift, which is at once a refusal of exchange and an alternative kind of gift, might be seen in terms of the Derridean notion of the aneconomic gift in that the gift to God manifestly escapes mundane economy by foreclosing the possibility of human exchange. On account of this gift, the saint often receives reciprocal rewards from God, yet the saint may not, presumably, *expect* such rewards as a matter of course. However, the point of depicting the triangulated relationship of the gift in hagiography is in order that an alternative economic framework might be glimpsed through the human economy outside of which the saint situates himself. The aneconomic gifts performed by the saint through acts of renunciation must be read in alternative economic terms to those which pertain in human contexts, yet the gift is still thereby situated within an economic framework of some kind. In a similar way to the Derridean description of the aneconomic gift, saints' lives encourage – even require – an appreciation of the economic structure that underwrites the gift to God, even if this structure cannot be taken for granted by the saintly *donateur*.

1.4.2. *Duble profit*

This effort to expose the gesture of the gift that lies behind the saint's material renunciations is clearly represented in those Lives which include large collections of miracles, such as the *Vie de saint Nicolas* and the *Vie de saint Jean L'Aumônier*. These Lives are structured less as linear narratives than as collections of short stories, stories which often lay particular emphasis on the giving power of the saint (material or otherwise) both before and after his death. The *Vie de saint Jean L'Aumônier* can be used to illustrate further some of the characteristics of the gift in hagiography as well as its importance for the workings of Christian economy.[39] The *Vie* begins by explaining the virtue of almsgiving in a world whose values are in decline, holding the saint up as a model of the kind of renunciation that contemporary Christians should attempt to emulate.[40] After regretting the fact that most contemporary penance seems rather sub-standard when compared to the spectacular hardships undertaken by saints like John, the

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[38] Schwartz notes that the saint's mediation between a fallen human present and God makes him a figure of nostalgia. One might see this construction of the saint in connection with his role as donor and the nostalgia often associated with the gift. See "Those Were the Days", esp. p. 33.
[39] I refer to Urwin's edition.
[40] Cf. Mauss's description of almsgiving in his 'Essai sur le don', pp. 58—59.

poem goes on to enumerate the benefits of almsgiving for its Christian audience. Almsgiving, explains the prologue, can be a means of wiping away sin, provided that one both repents and gives alms 'purement pur Deu' (JA, l. 43).[41] If performed in this way, the giving of alms serves two purposes beneficial to the donor:

> D'almodne surt duble profit,
> Kar ki en feit grant u petit,
> [...]
> Ke Deu sun bien lui cresterat,
> Tant qu'en cest siecle habunderat;
> E quant d'ici s'en partirat
> En l'autre siecle truverat
> Od Deu tel plenté de tut bien
> Que n'i avrat faute de rien.
> (JA, ll. 49—58)

The act of giving up one's property as an indication of allegiance to God is thus, paradoxically, a form of investment. Not only can the donor expect a dividend of heavenly goods upon his or her death, but a significant improvement in *worldly* circumstances is also predicted. Just how literally one can read the *bien* of the penultimate line in this context is of course open to debate; yet this is surely the point. The 'goods' that one receives from God in return for the giving up of material wealth are to be interpreted in terms of an economic system that dissociates acquisition and material property from one another. *Bien* is thus to be defined less as that which one possesses than it is to be thought of as that which one both gives to and receives from God.

Although there is an implicit assumption that two different transactional systems are at work here – namely, terrestrial and heavenly economies – these systems are not necessarily distinguished by their exclusive association with either 'gift' or 'commodity' values. The economy one enters by giving alms is certainly based upon an idealised conception of gift transmission, yet this economy – like human economy – is one that functions according to a logic of profit and loss. What distinguishes divine economy from human economy is therefore not the fact that one gives up worldly goods for God but, more importantly, the principle of *duble profit* which governs transactions made within the divine economic system. Put simply, the more one gives away for God, the more one receives in *both* worldly and non-worldly contexts. The point is therefore not to *reject* the logic of human economics but instead to upgrade to an economic system that performs twice as well as those seen to operate on earth.

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[41] Legge claims that the poem privileges almsgiving over penitence: *ANLB*, p. 254.

The way in which the celestial economy functions in practice is illustrated by one of the episodes in the Life itself. While out one Sunday morning, John is approached by a man of noble descent who has had everything he once possessed stolen from him. John agrees to give him financial aid and promptly asks his treasurer to give the man fifteen pounds of gold. However, after consulting two friends of his who are also in John's service, the treasurer decides to give the beggar only five of the fifteen pounds of gold that he has been promised. Meanwhile, a rich widow decides to make a private donation to John in the name of God, awarding him five hundred pounds of gold. After accepting her donation, John calls the three men to him and demands to know how much was given to the beggar that approached him. When the men lie to him, John confronts them with the letter of donation given to him by the rich widow, claiming that they are responsible for a decrease in the lady's donation: had fifteen pounds of gold been given to the beggar, her gift would have been three times greater. When the widow confirms that the figure she initially wrote on the piece of paper was miraculously changed from fifteen to five hundred, the three men repent of their actions and ask forgiveness of their master (JA, ll. 1121—1300).

This episode provides an example of the laws of profit and loss which operate in divine economy. As in the *Vie de saint Alexis*, relations of the gift are triangulated in so far as the giving up of material wealth operates on both a terrestrial level and on the level of one's relationship to God. The giving of alms to the poor man is a gift to God that is both reflected in and reciprocated by the widow's donation. This donation is not only the gift of a wealthy widow, it is also a gift transmitted from God to the saint: it is, after all, God who ultimately determines the amount written on the cheque that the lady hands over. However, the fact that the saint's act of charity to the beggar never takes place as originally intended results in a more complex exposure of the inner workings of the economic triangle. The two gifts are not only causally linked by their relation to divine economy, but are also connected in terms of the proportional value they have within that economy. Thus, the decrease in the value of the alms received by the pauper is proportionally equivalent to the shrinkage in the donation received by John from his rich benefactress. The amount that is given to the beggar in alms is still increased one-hundred-fold in the gift that repays this act of charity, yet the failure to give more in the first place results in a loss that reflects in equivalent terms the original deficit in the gift.

Thus, as might be expected, the treasurer's failure to award the full fifteen pounds of gold to the beggar has consequences that are at once spiritual and financial.

This double loss is emphasised in John's criticism of this stinginess when he confronts his men with the offence:

> 'Perte,' ceo [John] dist, 'grant avez feit
> A Deu par vostre grant surfeit.
> De dis cenz livres de fin or
> Descreu l'avez de sun estor.
> Si tant a l'hume eussez duné
> Cum jeo l'aveie cumandé,
> Ki cinc cenz livres presentat
> Par cest escrit que livré m'ad
> De quinze cenz eust present feit,
> Mes par vus sunt a Deu toleit.
> [...]'
> (JA, ll. 1203—12)

According to John, the failure to give away the full fifteen pounds in charity is thus to be criticised not as the cause of a diminution in their own finances; rather, it is condemned as a form of theft from God. By withholding the ten pounds of gold, the men are responsible for the reduction in those funds which, although at John's disposal, nonetheless belong to God as part of his *estor*. Moreover, this omission not only implies a failure to give but also suggests an act of removal: John not only attributes the *loss* of ten hundred pounds of gold to his men's actions, he accuses them of *taking* this money from God themselves. Indeed, this suggestion – which is already implicit in the use of the verb *tolir* in the last line of the above quotation – is reinforced later in John's speech, when he tells his men that 'sur vus en dette acunté seit | l'aveir qu'avez a Deu toleit.' (JA, ll. 1217—18).

Considered in relation to the prologue, John's words therefore imply that his men have misunderstood the principle of *duble profit* implicit in the giving of alms. What the treasurer and his friends fail to appreciate is that the gold they are to give to the beggar is wealth which is already implicated in a divine transactional system, which, in other words, is already possessed on loan, as a gift from God. By not giving the full amount, the men thus hold back that which is not theirs in the first place, 'stealing' that which should be renounced as a gift and thus failing to uphold their side of the economic bargain. The example that this story sets therefore suggests that it is not enough simply to give things up in God's name; participation in heavenly economy requires more than just material renunciation. According to John, the transactional system that enables one to interact with God requires, in addition to remissive gifts, the reassessment of the way one perceives materiality itself. The gift to God must involve giving up that which is seen as always already his; the gift must not simply be the

renunciation of property that one possesses in the context of human economy. In line with this argument, what is condemned in the exemplum is not money *per se* or even the acquisitive impulse that drives commercial systems; rather, it is the failure of John's men to see the material in spiritual terms which is the cause of criticism. What this implies is therefore that, in order for the remissive gift to mediate relations between the donor and God, what is given up must be seen as a gift in the truest sense. That is to say that gifts to God reinscribe what is perceived as an original relationship of non-possession between human subjects and the material objects that they give up.

The principle of *duble profit* that operates in divine economy both redirects and bifurcates desire for material acquisition in accordance with this attitude towards the material. Profitability within the context of celestial economy thus becomes a matter both of material gain on earth and of spiritual reward. Yet 'gain' or profit is, as a result, no longer defined in terms of possession: it is the product of an economic cycle in which that which one receives is always already possessed by God. The remissive gift, as a gift that expresses not just renunciation but also the *rendering* of material items that were never truly possessed by the donor in the first place, is thus one means of acknowledging this prior ownership. More importantly, this type of gift is also therefore a means of reinscribing the sovereignty over the material that this ownership implies, through a gesture that re-establishes that ownership as part of a relationship between human and divine transactors.

1.4.3. Sacrifice and the Remissive Gift

The way in which this kind of giving enables human subjects to articulate their relationship to God as an act of faith can be further illustrated by reference to the *Vie de saint Laurent*.[42] In this Life, the eponymous saint is a cleric living in Rome. Realising that Decius Caesar is on a persecuting mission, Syxtus – Lawrence's friend and superior – calls the saint to him and asks him to keep the treasure of the Church safe from the pagan tyrant. Lawrence takes the treasure and spends it in alms for the poor. When Syxtus has been martyred for his refusal to denounce his faith, Lawrence is also arrested and repeatedly (and unsuccessfully) asked to hand over the treasure of the Church to Decius. The saint is given three days in which to come up with the goods; when the three days are up, the saint produces the poor to whom he gave alms, claiming that they are the treasure of the Church. Having explained the logic of this within the context of his Christian faith (and having thus thoroughly confused Decius), Lawrence is stripped

[42] I refer to Russell's edition.

and beaten before being tortured. At a public hearing the next day, Lawrence is further interrogated concerning the treasure and declares his faith in the 'tresor celestien'. The saint is then repeatedly subjected to tortures, during which he is comforted by God. The next day, Lawrence is grilled on an iron grid suspended above a large fire, where he dies praising God.

Treasure in the *Vie de saint Laurent* is implicated in precisely the kind of economic system that I have outlined in connection with the Lives of Alexis and John. On one level, treasure functions as a gift from Lawrence to the Christian brethren that he nourishes at the Church's expense; on a more figurative level, however, treasure also provides a means of contrasting the different attitudes towards the material that characterise pagan and Christian religions in the text.[43] In this sense, treasure functions semantically in much the same way as does profit in the Life of John the Almsgiver. The value of treasure as a material possession is progressively renegotiated as the term is shown to function within an alternative sphere to that of human economy. The distinction between economies that this redefinition reveals in the Life of St Lawrence is not, however, simply a distinction between human and divine transactional systems, as it is in the examples I have given from the lives of Alexis and John. In the *Vie de saint Laurent*, treasure and the alternative meanings it has within terrestrial and celestial economies is also used to distinguish between Christian and pagan belief systems. Although the notion of treasure plays an unusually important role in the thematic development of this Life, treasure – as both metaphor and material object – is also part of a repertoire of commonplace hagiographic and scriptural motifs.[44] It should therefore be borne in mind that the economic uses of treasure in the *Vie de saint Laurent* are not confined to this text; rather, they invoke and often develop conventional aspects of Christian ideology and of the hagiographic corpus as a whole.

As I have suggested, treasure has two, connected functions in Lawrence's Life: it functions both as a gift and as a metaphor. These two functions come together most clearly in the act of charity that the saint performs at the beginning of the narrative. After taking the treasure that has been entrusted to him and selling it to the Christians, Lawrence gathers together all the poor people he can find and distributes among them

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[43] Calin makes a similar point in 'Saints' Stories', pp. 24—31 and *The French Tradition*, pp. 90—91. See also Johnson and Cazelles, *Le Vain Siècle*, pp. 30—32.
[44] For scriptural examples see Matthew 6. 20, 13. 44, and 19. 21; Mark 10. 21; and Luke 18. 22.

the proceeds from his sale of ecclesiastical memorabilia.[45] Lawrence's disposal of the treasure with which he has been entrusted is described explicitly as a gift that he makes in the name of God: having gathered the poor together, Lawrence 'l'aveir lor a por Deu doné' (Lau, l. 152). Moreover, the saint's gift is considered to be 'resonable justise' not only because it conforms to the injunction to distribute wealth among the poor, thereby repaying (*deservir*) the gift of God's grace (Lau, ll. 153—64), but also because it is intended to keep the wealth of the Church within a system of Christian economy:

> Quant dona por l'amor Dé
> L'aveir qui lui fu commandé;
> Car se en sa garde trové fust
> A l'oes Deu gardé pas ne l'eust.
> Es membres Deu l'a despendu
> Et cil l'unt mangé et beu.
> Il set bien que li tirant
> S'i prendrunt mal vers lui par tant.
> (Lau, ll. 161—68)

In addition to articulating his own allegiance to God, Lawrence's gift thus also enables him to maintain that which he gives away as part of a transactional system over which God has sovereign authority. Indeed, it is significant that in putting the material wealth of the Church to properly Christian use, Lawrence's gift of alms also results in a type of communion. The money that the saint distributes among the *membres Deu* that make up his congregation of paupers is accepted by them in much the same way as the body and the blood of Christ in Christian ritual, namely in the form of a communal consumption of food and drink. The saint's almsgiving thus supports celestial economy as part of his own relationship to God and, in so doing, serves to convert material goods into relations of Christian community.

The symbolic importance of this is later emphasised when, claiming that he has finally brought the treasure of the Church to the pagan authorities as requested, Lawrence produces the paupers to whom he gave alms. When explaining the reasoning behind his action, the saint insists that the poor people he has brought before Decius are in fact the treasure of the Church:[46]

> 'Ves ci le tresor qui ne faut,
> Descreistre ne puet, ains creistra,
> Tiex est ja n'amenuisera.'

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[45] Russell points out that the sale of the treasure is found in the abridged Latin sources. In the *Passio*, the Church vestments and treasures are given by the saint to a widow who has been sheltering Christians and clergy in her house. See *Lawrence*, ed. by Russell, p. 64 (note to l. 150). See also Wogan-Browne and Burgess, *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths*, p. 81, n. 14.

[46] On the role of humour in this passage in the *Vita* by Prudentius, see Conybeare, 'The Ambiguous Laughter of Saint Lawrence', pp. 186—91.

(Lau, ll. 418—20)

According to the saint, this 'living' treasure thus has guaranteed growth value *in aeternum*; however, Lawrence's assertion is more than simply a matter of confounding his pagan persecutors with semantic games. This concept of treasure is associated with a Christian belief system that invokes the economic logic illustrated previously by the saint's act of donation. What the saint suggests is that value resides not in the material properties of items exchanged within human economy but is instead measured in spiritual terms, in the context of an interactive relationship to God. The Christian poor, as *membres Deu* and as recipients of God's gifts through the saint, represent Church treasure insofar as they participate in a relation to God that will eventually guarantee them gifts that surpass human riches: salvation and eternal life.[47] Indeed, as Lawrence later points out, his refusal to sacrifice to the pagan gods is grounded in a conviction that these deities have no value beyond the purely material: they are 'mu et sort, | car d'or sunt, d'argent et d'araim' (Lau, ll. 434—35). This, claims Lawrence, would mean worshipping that which was made by man, as opposed to venerating man's creator; the living treasure of the Church must therefore be seen in contrast to the sumptuous, but inanimate materiality of Decius's pagan statues.

The distinction between pagan and Christian attitudes towards the material is further emphasised during Lawrence's tortures, when the saint asserts his faith in the Christian 'treasure' that will save him. When informed by his pagan torturers that the riches he refuses to hand over will not save him from torment, the saint retorts:

> 'Veirs est, en mon tresor m'afi
> Que nule peour n'ai de tei.
> En cil m'afi en qui jeo crei.
> En mon tresor ai esperance
> Que tei ne dot ne ta faisance.
> Crei al tresor celestien
> Que ne dout torment terrien.
> Ne l'avras ja par nul torment;
> Doné l'ai tot a povre gent.
> Deu m'iert garant; bon confort ai.
> Quanque faire me pues, ore me fai.'
> (Lau, ll. 603—13)

The implication of the first lines of Lawrence's credo is that, as far as he is concerned, treasure is synonymous with Christ. The 'treasure' in which the saint claims he has faith in the first line is clearly associated with 'cil' in whom the saint believes and has faith in

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[47] Lawrence's congregation of paupers possibly invokes Matthew 5. 3: 'blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'. This would lend weight to the suggestion that their 'value' resides in the salvation promised to them.

line three. It is, however, significant that Lawrence's speech does not end with this metaphor but goes on to mention the act of Christian charity that got him into trouble in the first place. This not only serves to re-emphasise the contrast between the material and the spiritual meanings of treasure when seen in the context of the Christian faith, but also associates these meanings with a broader religious economy. The latter part of Lawrence's speech reminds the audience of the implications of the gift he has made; this gift is the product of the faith he has just reaffirmed and part of a relationship that guarantees him God's protection. Moreover, Lawrence's discourse suggests that the martyrdom he is suffering is situated within the broader context of on-going communication between himself and God. The saint's assertion of faith and his mention of the gift he made in God's name prefaces the claim that, as God was/will be his protector (*garant*), he is prepared to suffer whatever torments his persecutors can devise. The saint's faith thus involves him in a relationship that not only alters the way he evaluates the material world but which also implies an interaction with the divine that informs and is confirmed by his suffering under torture.

This provides a context for reading Lawrence's subsequent martyrdom, a martyrdom that serves to confirm the economic basis of the saint's relationship to God. Like his former gift to the poor, Lawrence's martyrdom is the resubmission to God of that which is considered already to belong to him. Lawrence himself points this out to his torturers:

> 'Mei ai en sacrefise osfert
> A Deu, a qui sui donez,
> Car esperit qu'est atriblez
> Est sacrefise al Creator.'
> (Lau, ll. 847—50)

The saint thus asserts that his sufferings rearticulate an act of self-donation that has already been made. The saint's sacrifice is both an offering Lawrence has made and continues to make through his martyrdom and the acknowledgement of the 'givenness' that means he already belongs to his creator. His submission to God through sacrifice is therefore a gift that operates in a similar economic context to the gifts of alms that Lawrence has already made: that which belongs to God by rights is resubmitted to him as a gift that translates material objects into spiritual relationships. Once again, the saint's connection to God is reaffirmed through a gift that acknowledges God's sovereign possession of that which is given up, and which thereby maintains the integrity of a Christian economy in conflict with the literal-minded materialism of pagan religion. What Lawrence's words ultimately suggest, therefore, is that sacrifice

both reveals and reinscribes an economic ethos that informs all relations of the gift as a properly Christian form of religious transaction.

1.5. The Aneconomic Gift in Hagiography

The construction and deployment of fictions of Christian economy thus plays a significant role in hagiography's ideological project. The didactic function of these texts frequently depends on their exposition of a transactional system in which exchange with God is preferable to, and often more lucrative than, similar kinds of economic interaction with one's fellow human beings. Seen in the light of Derrida's thinking on sacrifice, the economic nature of the gift in saints' lives raises important issues with regard to the modern theorisation of the sacrificial gift. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Derrida's theory of the gift of death in Judeo-Christian tradition characterises the gift as essentially and necessarily aneconomic in the sense that the integrity of the true gift depends on its absence from the sphere of economic relations. If relationship to this sphere is established – by the recognition of the gift as a gift, or by the attribution to the gift of qualities that make it an item of exchange – the gift, according to Derrida, loses its status as such.

By contrast, what the representation of economy in saints' lives suggests is that such an account of sacrifice can only partially describe the complex function of the gift in Christian hagiography. For, while it may be true that in hagiography gifts are given by the saint to God without expectation of return or repayment – that, in other words, the saint's gifts lack those qualities which would give them human, economic character – the function of the gift within divine transactional systems is associated with an alternative economy, not with an absence of it. Saints' lives thus seem to bear out L. O. Aranye Fradenburg's claim that 'the impossible time of the gift does not so much suspend economy as time it. Sacrifice means to get back, with interest, whatever it renounces'.[48] Furthermore, it is only by virtue of the fact that they are not thought to possess the conventional values of items exchanged in human economy that the saint's gifts are able to participate in an alternative economic arrangement in which they can get back 'with interest' whatever is renounced. In other words, it is the aneconomic

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[48] Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love*, p. 15 (see also her comments on the gift of death in a discussion of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, pp. 171—72). This is also a point made by Žižek: 'At its most elementary, sacrifice relies on the notion of exchange: I offer to the Other something precious to me in order to get back from the Other something even more vital to me. [...] The next, already more intricate, level is to conceive sacrifice as a gesture which does not directly aim at some profitable exchange with the Other to whom we sacrifice: its more basic aim is rather to ascertain that there IS some Other out there who is able to reply (or not) to our sacrificial entreaties.' This 'empty' sacrifice is, he claims, the Christian gesture *par excellence*. *On Belief*, p. 69.

character of the gift in human contexts that provides the basis of its economic value in the sphere of celestial relations.

This has an impact on how the forms of sacrifice depicted in hagiography are to be read vis-à-vis the Derridean account of the gift of death. In saints' lives, the gift of one's own death is not so much a model of aneconomic sacrifice as it is an expression of a particular kind of economic principle that also applies to other forms of remissive gift. Death, when it appears in saints' lives as a gift to God, not only has a value that places it outside human economy, it also functions within a context of reiterative giving that ultimately determines its alternative economic character. This point can be further illustrated by an example from the *Vie de saint Georges* by Simund de Freine.[49] At the very beginning of the saint's life, George's decision to serve God has an economic character identical to that already outlined, in that the saint's affirmation of faith is initially articulated through his renunciation of worldly riches (Ge, ll. 73—158). As in the *Vie de saint Laurent*, the sacrificial dynamics of this material renunciation are later repeated through the saint's martyrdom, which physically reinscribes the remissive gift as an act of self-sacrifice performed in the name of God. However, as if to reinforce this point, George agrees to die not *once* for his divine master but *three times*, finally giving up the ghost when he is put to death for a fourth time by the pagan emperor.[50]

George's repeated self-sacrifice is in fact part of a contractual agreement that God establishes with the saint almost immediately after his tortures begin. While in prison, the saint is informed that if he dies three times to defend God's law, he will, on the fourth occasion, be taken into paradise to sit at God's right hand (Ge, ll. 423—492). This repetition of sacrifice clearly serves to illustrate George's allegiance to God through a reiterative performance of the gift while, at the same time, emphasising the fact that what George renounces is itself a gift from God: it is only by virtue of the fact that God restores the saint to life on three occasions, as he has promised, that George is able to give his life to God three times. The saint's self-sacrifice thus appears as the gift of a life that he already possesses on loan, as part of an agreement that commits him to renounce it in God's name until the contract negotiated with his divine sovereign expires along with his body.

George's example therefore reveals the economic basis of sacrifice by making the gift of death (or life) part of a process of gift and counter-gift between the saint and

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[49] I use Matzke's edition. On manuscripts, see Dean and Boulton, pp. 292—3 (entry 528).

[50] Kay argues persuasively that the almost comical violence in this text is not purely illustrative, but also enjoyable as part of the process of hagiographic sublimation to which the saint's body is subject. Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, pp. 224—6. On the virtuosity of this version of the life, see Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 47—53.

God. Two important features of this process should be emphasised. Firstly, what is at stake in George's martyrdom is not simply the integrity or the continuity of the material body but God's sovereignty over the material world in more general terms. The saint has repeatedly to choose martyrdom over the material benefits offered to him by Decius, receiving his reward when the various bits of his shredded, boiled or otherwise mangled corpse have been reassembled three times by Christ and St Michael. Thus, what George repeatedly renounces is not just that which makes him a human individual but, more importantly, a materiality that he acknowledges to be commanded and maintained by God.[51] This paradigm would correspond to forms of giving seen in other saints' lives (such as those of John and Alexis) which have no necessary connection to physical sacrifice as a vehicle of the gift.

Secondly, the contractual context in which the saint's acts of martyrdom occur means that self-sacrifice is a demonstration of faith in God's adherence to certain economic principles. George must not only believe that God will be there to – quite literally – pick up the pieces when he is torn apart on three separate occasions; the saint must also have faith in the eternal reward he is promised for fulfilling his side of the sacrificial agreement. Death is thus given by the saint as a token of belief in a system of exchange: by offering himself in sacrifice, George demonstrates his faith in God's reciprocation. As a result, death appears not as a singular event but as part of a reiterative process of giving that engages the saint in a continual performance of faith through sacrifice. In this respect one might compare the other lives examined in this chapter to the *Vie de saint Georges*. As I have suggested, these texts represent the economic interaction between the saint and God in similar ways: the significance of the gift lies not so much in *what* is given but instead depends on the way in which it is given up and the meaning that this gift has in a wider celestial economy.

The connection in hagiography between the gift of death and the repetition of sacrifice through the remissive gift is not therefore, as Derrida would claim, a connection that depends on the repetition of an aneconomic renunciation of human singularity. Derrida, in this sense, seems rather too ready to read Christian discourse on its own terms. Instead, what medieval saints' lives suggest is that the gift of death is

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[51] I would therefore suggest that vernacular hagiography of the high Middle Ages does not conform to Bynum's characterisation of bodily fragmentation and redemption in later medieval saints' lives as part of a contemporary cultural identification of the body — or, more specifically of the body's material continuity — with identity. In this case, this would be to misconstrue the particular representational context in which the dismemberment and reconstitution of the saint takes place, in that material continuity is more often an effect of God's power over the physical world than it is a resuscitation of an individual human being. Cf. *Fragmentation and Redemption*, pp. 239—297.

only paradigmatic inasmuch as it articulates a similar form of material renunciation to other sorts of gift. This paradigm depends on an absence of economy only insofar as it relies upon the rejection of *human* transactional systems for superior and more lucrative celestial counterparts. Derrida's definition of sacrifice as the gift of that which defines the individual needs to be similarly recontextualised. In hagiography, the sacrificial gift can be read as the repudiation of human singularity only in the sense that life, like all other kinds of material property, is re-envisaged as always already a gift from God and therefore never as an attribute possessed by the self in the first place. The remissive gift thus obliterates the self only by virtue of the fact that it implies reading the material – including the material attributes that define the individual – in an alternative economic context.

1.6. The Gender of the Gift

This suggests a much broader line of inquiry into the representation of sacrifice in saints' lives than Derrida's theory would allow. The importance of seeing the gift of death as part of a redefinition of attitudes towards the material through economic processes is that, whereas life and death are potentially universal objects of the gift, other items renounced in the context of celestial economy have a more local or contingent value for the donor. These gifts still have the quality of being always already given, yet they are also dependent upon factors that determine the individual's access to and position within material structures, such as gender and social position. To return briefly to the example of Alexis, what the saint gives up in his pursuit of a saintly career are those items that define his position as a married nobleman in human society, items which most notably include his inheritance, his money and his wife. Although, as suggested above, the renunciations that the saint performs have an important material dimension, they also have personal significance in that these gifts signify a material and social identity that Alexis must reject in order to devote himself to God. The saint thus rejects those things which tie him to the material world as part of a process that detaches him from the human systems that would define his identity in relation to property and social status.[52]

The fact that sacrifice – and the remissive gift more generally – operates in a context of exchange dependent on donation as a form of giving-up means that it has a direct relationship to the terrestrial networks that define identities in the material world. More specifically, sacrificial economy must engage with the social systems that inscribe

[52] I have developed this argument elsewhere. See Campbell, 'Separating the Saints from the Boys'.

socially normative forms of gender and sexuality. For, as feminist anthropologists such as Gayle Rubin have long pointed out, the forms of exchange that sustain social systems have at least two significant implications for questions of gender and sexuality.[53] Firstly, one's position within social systems is contingent upon a relationship to material property that is almost always gender specific. Rubin points out that, in Lévi-Strauss's seminal work on kinship structures, the traffic in women – usually through exchanges that involve heterosexual marriage – is fundamental to the maintenance of social systems. Women are therefore objects rather than subjects of exchange, they do not so much possess material property as incarnate it. Secondly, participation in kinship networks, as a result both of the gendered nature of exchange and of the heterosexual imperative it supports, makes it one of the primary means whereby individuals are both gendered and sexually normalised.[54] Rubin therefore argues that kinship is an empirical form of what she describes as a 'sex/gender system': a system in which certain, pre-determined forms of gender and sexuality are obligatory to participation in the social networks which that system underwrites.

This would suggest that if the moment of donation itself is the same for all saints, access to the material structures that enable this donation to take place is not: male and female saints must renounce gifts that are materially contingent on their identities *as* men and women, identities that usually inscribe different relationships to material property. Thus, although men and women have the same access to celestial economy, this access relies on their renunciation (as gifts) of those things which define them as men and women in the first place. This has additional implications for how hagiographic texts negotiate issues of gender and sexuality that will be explored in Chapter Two; the saint's relationship to sex and gender norms is substantially altered by his or her exclusion from the socio-economic systems that supposedly anchor and enforce such norms in human contexts. Saints like Alexis not only give up items that tie them to the material world, they also renounce the (gendered) social and sexual roles – as husbands, wives, *seignurs* and *dames* – that those items connote.

One way of thinking further about how gender informs the saint's transition between networks of exchange is in relation to the work of feminist anthropologist Marilyn Strathern. In *The Gender of the Gift*, Strathern elaborates a theory of social economy distinct from that which underpins modern, Western society. This theory

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[53] Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women'. On both points see also Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology*, esp. pp. 12—41 and 54—72; on gender and marriage/property networks see Whitehead, 'Men and Women, Kinship and Property'; on gender and sexuality see Ortner and Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings*, esp. pp. 1—27.
[54] Cf. Butler's critique of this position in *Gender Trouble*, pp. 92—97.

focuses on her examination of societies in which gift exchange (as opposed to commodity exchange) is used as a means of structuring social interaction. Strathern distinguishes between commodity and gift economies by claiming that commodity exchange creates *relations between objects* (as things which are exchanged), whereas gift exchange creates *relations between exchanging subjects*.[55] She points out that understanding this distinction involves reconceptualising our own assumptions about the status of things and persons and the ways in which they interrelate. For, unlike commodity economies, which are characterised by objectification (seeing both things and persons as objects), gift economies are instead characterised by personification.[56]

As Strathern's title – *The Gender of the Gift* – suggests, this theory has a direct impact on how gender identity is conceptualised in gift cultures. According to Strathern, one of the outcomes of the personifying tendencies of gift economies is that agency and identity are not seen as properties of the individual in the same sense as they are in commodity economies. Rather than perceiving ownership of self and authorship of action as defining attributes — or things — belonging to the individual (as do commodity cultures), gift cultures construe personhood in terms of social relations and the capacities evinced within those relations. The implications of this for a consideration of gender identity is that, where commodity values dictate that individuals possess gender as a thing, the logic of gift economies defines gender within a framework of relations between exchanging subjects. Hence Strathern's claim that 'the basis for [gender] classification does not inhere in the objects themselves but in how they are transacted and to what ends. The action is the gendered activity'.[57] In other words, gender is not possessed but rather manifested in the way in which exchange is performed.

Regardless of whether or not one agrees with Strathern's distinction between gift and commodity economy, her theory provides a way of thinking about how identity might emerge from certain kinds of economic interaction. As noted above, saints' lives do not construct oppositions between gift and commodity economies but rather rely on the tensions between alternative economies of the gift as these are defined in relation to human society and to God. What Strathern's argument suggests is that the shift between these two economies in hagiography might be construed as a shift between relational

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[55] The distinction Strathern draws here is based on an observation made by Gregory in his study, *Gifts and Commodities*. It is a distinction that operates more or less explicitly in much anthropological and sociological work on the gift.

[56] Kay has used Strathern's ideas on the gift in her work on French epic. See *The* Chansons de Geste *in the Age of Romance*.

[57] Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift*, p. xi.

systems, systems that define gender in performatively different ways. By redefining his or her association with the material world, the saint implicitly redefines the relational context in which his or her gender is manifested. In the final sections of this chapter I will therefore consider how Strathern's ideas might be brought to bear on interpretations of male and female saints' lives, beginning with examples from the lives of virgin martyrs and concluding with a reading of the *Vie de saint Julien l'Hospitallier*.

1.6.1. Virginity and the Gift

The Lives of the virgin martyrs have been the subject of an increasing amount of critical debate in recent years. Feminist scholars such as Simon Gaunt and Katherine Gravdal have argued for the voyeuristic, misogynist appeal of these narratives and the spectacle of sexual violence against women that they describe.[58] In a similar vein, Brigitte Cazelles, in her anthology of female saints' lives, argues for a reading of these texts as ambivalent representations of a feminine ideal, claiming that the means by which this ideal is exposed is 'a sacrificial process in the course of which the heroine is transformed into a mute and passive victim'.[59] By contrast, scholars such as Evelyn Birge Vitz have argued against interpretations of this kind, asserting that that while male and female martyrs are presented and treated differently, gender is ultimately only of limited importance in these accounts.[60]

What seems to be more or less explicitly at issue in these debates is the material status of the body – specifically the female body – and how this materiality is to be read within the context of the religious literature that represents it.[61] This is nowhere better illustrated than in the scholarly attention that has been paid to female virginity and the ideological or political investment that its representation in hagiography implies. One of the preoccupations of feminist writing on female martyrs has been how virginity is represented as a particular form of sexuality. As certain critics have indicated, however, this sexual status is not simply a matter of 'technical intactness',[62] but also implies a particular moral and spiritual position that removes the female virgin from circulation as

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[58] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 180—233; Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, pp. 21—41.
[59] Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, p. 44.
[60] Vitz, 'Gender and Martyrdom' (for her critique of Gravdal, see 'Rereading Rape'). Lees both endorses and modifies such an approach by suggesting that female saints in Anglo-Saxon sources both transcend the body and remain feminine: 'Engendering Religious Desire'.
[61] For other perspectives on female saints and the body, see, for example, Kelly, *Performing Virginity*, pp. 40—62 and 'Useful Virgins'; E. Robertson, 'The Corporeality of Female Sanctity'. Cf. *SLWLC*, pp. 57—79 and 245—56.
[62] I adopt Wogan-Browne's term. See her discussion of virginity in relation to spiritual and social hierarchies: 'The Virgin's Tale', pp. 166—68. See also R. H. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, pp. 97—8. Cf. Weinstein and Bell's distinction between virginity (as a physical fact) and chastity (as a state of mind), in *Saints and Society*, p. 73.

a marriage object in terrestrial social networks. Critics such as Simon Gaunt, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Kathleen Coyne Kelly have thus emphasised the way in which virginity is not only *sexually* significant but also has profound *structural* importance as a symbol to be read within both physical and metaphysical gift networks.[63] For instance, Wogan-Browne's most recent work on saints' lives focuses on what she terms the 'dotality' of the virgin (the virgin's capacity to be given or to give). The sexual dimension of virginity, Wogan-Browne argues, is often less important than its socio-economic character as a gift, a gift which enables the female virgin saint to escape dotal control (usually by men) and offer herself to Christ.[64] Similarly insisting on the virgin's exclusion from social and sexual exchange, Kelly and Gaunt emphasise that this status often entails the manipulation of the virgin as a gift controlled by the Church and its ideologies. Kelly further suggests that the radical inexchangeability of the virgin is potentially compromised by her circulation in hagiographic literature, a circulation which threatens the monologic discourse that saints' lives attempt to maintain.[65]

Following on from some of this work in respect to my own argument on the gift, I will suggest that virginity can be thought of as a state of integrity through remission; in other words, virginity is a condition of physical and spiritual wholeness maintained through the refusal of human material and social structures. Virginity is therefore not to be thought of as an *item* to be offered to God; instead, it represents the evidence of the (female) saint's inclusion in a spiritual economy that requires her removal from human economic structures through the remissive gift. Thus, although virginity is undoubtedly a form of piety that is particularly characteristic of female sanctity,[66] it also has an economic function that is structurally similar to the forms of giving seen in the hagiographic corpus more widely.

It follows that female agency in saints' lives should be considered within this context. For, if it is the case in other saints' lives that the gift inscribes a kind of donation in which the saint acknowledges that what is given up for God is always already his, this would mean that the remissive giving associated with virginity evinces a similarly complex form of economic activity. It will be my contention that the virgin does not 'give' herself to God (at least no more so than other saints are able to give

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[63] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 180—233 and 'Si Les Anges avaient un sexe...'; Kelly, 'Useful Virgins'; *SLWLC*, pp. 57—90.
[64] *SLWLC*, pp. 57—90 (pp. 79—86).
[65] Kelly, 'Useful Virgins', pp. 155—7. R. H. Bloch describes how depiction of the virgin is equivalent to her deflowering: *Medieval Misogyny*, pp. 97—101 and 110—12.
[66] See, for example, Wogan-Browne, 'The Virgin's Tale', p. 166 and 'Chaste Bodies', p. 2; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 185—6; and Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex*, pp. 127—8.

themselves to God). Instead, in a similar way to her saintly colleagues, the virgin acknowledges and publicly asserts a prior, divine ownership of self through gestures of the remissive gift that articulate that prior possession.

The assertion that virginity is a state of physical and spiritual integrity maintained through one's rejection of an active role in material and social networks is not especially controversial. This interpretation has a relatively well-established critical lineage based upon the insights of contemporary medieval treatises on virginity such as *Hali Meiðhad*.[67] One of the first principles of what is generally thought of as a specifically female form of religious dedication is that in order to be a virgin one must refuse earthly marriage, wealth and status, along with all that this implies in both social and spiritual terms. The decision to be a virgin thus has numerous earthly benefits (which are mostly related to the virgin's escape from the dangers and inconveniences of husbands and children) and also guarantees a privileged relationship to God. Virginity thus has physical and spiritual significance within both human and divine transactional systems, a significance that impacts upon the socio-economic status of the virgin with regard to both of these networks.

The female saint is possibly the nearest that this religious principle comes to incarnation. Virginity in hagiographic texts has a dynamic function in that it is repeatedly asserted through the saint's rejection of human social systems, the implications of which can be illustrated with an example from the *Vie de sainte Agnès*.[68] As is often the case in the lives of female martyrs, Agnes receives a superficially attractive proposal of marriage (at least by human standards) at a relatively early stage of the narrative, but has to disappoint her earthly suitor. As well as turning down the offer of marriage, Agnes also implicitly refuses the material and emotional bases upon which that offer is made. The marriage that the young man proposes is the result of a romantic impulse associated with the sentimental conventions of romance and lyric genres. The young man declares his love for Agnes in the highly stylised language of Ovidian tradition as mediated through the courtly lyric: he is held as her prisoner, he experiences great affliction, he is undone by her beauty, he blushes at her gaze, he will die if he cannot be sure of her love (Agn, ll. 63—68). This declaration of love is not just an emotional offer, however; Agnes' admirer makes plain that, as her husband, he could also offer her both wealth and social status (Agn, ll. 69—76). When Agnes turns her

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[67] See *Hali Meiðhad*, in *Medieval English Prose for Women*, ed. by Millett and Wogan-Browne, pp. 2—43 (which also contains editions and commentary on other sections of the Katherine Group and *Ancrene Wisse*). For critical readings of these texts see Wogan-Browne, 'The Virgin's Tale' and 'Chaste Bodies'.
[68] I use Denomy's edition.

suitor down, she therefore rejects the emotional, material and social gifts that have been offered to her, claiming that these things hold neither value nor attraction for her (Agn, l. 84).[69]

This rejection is clearly a refusal of those things Agnes would possess if she were to accept a well-to-do and romantically inclined earthly husband, but it is also an assertion of a superior relationship to Christ that both fulfils all of these criteria and predates the comparatively paltry offer of the young man. Agnes tells her worldly suitor that not only has she accepted and returned the love of an exceptional king, she has also received his gifts, including a ring, a seal and a mantle with tassels made of chastity (Agn, ll. 87—100).[70] One of the most striking aspects of Agnes' description is the way in which this relationship to Christ transforms how her body is to be read physically; in asserting her relationship to Christ, the saint claims that:

> Atorne m'a moult gentement mon cors
> De margerites, de gemmes, et d'anors
> Dont ne luist pas li beautes par defors,
> Mais ens el cuer en gist tous li depors.
> (Agn, ll. 105—08)

The treasures that Agnes receives from her divine lover both adorn and permeate her body, overriding conventional divisions between internal and external, physical and metaphysical. In accepting these gifts, the saint embodies them as parts of herself, making her physicality living proof of her relationship to Christ and a site from which that relationship might be read.[71] Agnes is unequivocal in asserting the implications of this dialectic: in receiving and internalising Christ's gifts Agnes also therefore belongs to him. The saint's assertion that 'toute sui siue, autre chose tensa' asserts an emotional bond that invokes this physical belonging (Agn, l. 112). Agnes is thus dedicated to God as an otherworldly spouse, yet she is also 'his' in a more physical sense in that her material being both consumes and is consumed by the relationship of the gift that this marriage implies.

Agnes' virginal marriage to Christ is thus seen as an alternative to earthly love and the material wealth and status she would enjoy as a worldly bride. Yet, the saint

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[69] Thompson considers the specificity of the treatment of marriage and female agency in the 13th -century *Vie* in her comparative analysis of the Latin, French and English versions of the life of St Agnes. See Thompson, 'Improvisation and the Practice of Hagiography'. On the saint's verbal dissidence and related questions of agency in Bockenham's version of the legend, see Mills, 'Can the Virgin Martyr Speak?'.

[70] These passages may draw on Ezekiel 16. 8—14, which represent the covenant between God and Jerusalem in similar terms.

[71] Denomy notes that the jewels Agnes describes here are identified with the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Latin *Gesta sanctae Agnes* does not mention the physical transformation of the saint. See *Agnes*, ed. by Denomy, p. 122.

also suggests that accepting this alternative status involves redefining the notions of possession and material value that inform the offer that has been made to her by her human suitor. This not only entails reconsidering in terms of celestial economy the value of the marriage that the young man urges Agnes to accept, but also implies redefining the way in which the consecrated female body is perceived within that economic framework. In relation to Strathern's argument concerning the manifestation of gender through the performance of exchange, certain aspects of this process of redefinition should be underlined. As has been noted in relation to other saints, the female virgin participates in an alternative economy in which she commends herself to God by renouncing as gifts those things which would determine her identity in human social systems and, perhaps more importantly, by offering herself *as a gift* to God. What Wogan-Browne has termed the 'dotality' of the virgin is therefore connected to an alternative definition of the saint's social and sexual identity, a definition that transforms the way the virgin's sexual body and her gender are to be read.[72] The female virgin's interaction with God results in a radical reformulation of her gendered capacities as an agent within exchange as well as the gendered identity that depends upon such agency; as seen in the Life of St Agnes, this reformulation is expressed in material terms, by the transformation of the virgin's body as an object of marital exchange and sexual desire.[73]

This transformation is also clearly in evidence in other female saints' lives; in the *Vie de sainte Euphrosine*, for example, seeing the saint as the bride of Christ similarly implies seeing her value as a marriage object in an alternative economic setting.[74] As in the Life of St Agnes, Euphrosine's virginity entails the rejection of a certain kind of worldly status. Although the saint accepts the fact that marriage might be acceptable for those who 'voroit netement demener sens putage', she claims her own aspirations to be incompatible with this vocation, asserting that it is preferable to remain a virgin and give up one's family (*parens*) and inheritance (*yretage*) for God (Euph, ll. 181—88). For Euphrosine, as for Agnes, being a virgin is not simply a matter of retaining her sexual integrity, it is also a vocation that requires her to sacrifice the kinship ties and material wealth that define her secular identity in order to devote herself to a divine *seigneur*.

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[72] This would complicate arguments for the voyeurism of female saints' lives, on which see Campbell, 'Sacrificial Spectacle', *SLWLC*, pp. 57—90; Lees and Overing, 'Before History, Before Difference', pp. 322—3 and *Double Agents*, pp. 119 – 21 and 132 – 51. Cf. Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, pp. 47—59; Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens*, p. 24; and Kelly, 'Useful Virgins'.

[73] For discussion of similar processes in the Anglo-Norman Life of St Foy, see *SLWLC*, pp. 73—9.

[74] I refer to Hill's edition.

The confirmation of Euphrosine's desire to remain a virgin is expressed through a form of spiritual marriage that takes place in the ceremony where the saint changes her name and becomes a nun. This ceremony creates an alternative context for the reading of Euphrosine's identity, a context that emphasises her value in a spiritual as opposed to a worldly setting. Euphrosine's new name – Esmerade – not only passes for either sex, it also identifies her with the precious gem of the same title:

> [...] Esmerade l'apele.
> Cis nons est comunaz a marle et a femele.
> Esmerades est gemme et preciose et bele.
> Ele est jostee a Deu come piere en anele,
> Car ele est et s'espose et s'amie et s'ancele.
> Sa colors, sa verdors li est frece et novele.
> U ke vait li espos, o li vait sa donzele.
> Une est des doses pieres en la Deu coronele.
> El temple Salomon n'en ot nule plus bele.
> (Euph, ll. 445—53)

Euphrosine is thus not only *called* Esmerade, she actually *becomes* Esmerade; the physical distinction between the female saint and the precious stone whose name she now bears being entirely extinguished by their symbolic association. As with Agnes, the metamorphosis of Euphrosine's linguistic and physical identity takes the form of her re-evaluation as a marriage-object. Euphrosine's physical beauty and material worth as an heiress are projected onto the symbol of the precious stone and given metaphysical meaning through the association of this gem with divine rather than earthly riches. Her value as a marriageable virgin thus becomes that of the stone that fits the ring, the gem in God's crown, and ultimately that of the Esmerade 'esposee et saisie | a Deu' (Euph, ll. 454—55). Thus, while Euphrosine's marriage to God has the effect of confirming her spiritual vocation, it also revolutionises the way in which her identity and her sexual body are contextualised and defined. She may still be a highly prized, virginal love-object, but this identity is now associated with her place in heaven as opposed to her place on earth, with the lustre of the precious stone rather than the allure of the female body.[75]

What occurs in the symbolic transformation of the female saint's body is therefore a form of economic disembodiment: that is, an emphasis of spiritual value (and equivalence of value) that replaces the female body even as it represents it in economic terms. This value obscures the virgin's gender while, at the same time, giving

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[75] Euphrosine's new name potentially associates her with the emeralds on God's throne (Rev. 4) and the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21. 19). The metaphorical association of the virgin's body with jewels, treasure and sacred vessels dates back to patristic sources.

it new meaning by allowing the saint's identity to be read in terms of an economic relationship that transcends mortal economy. This points to one of the differences between how male and female saints participate in celestial economy through the remissive gift. As for all saints, the female saint's interaction with God has an economic character in that it is based upon similar models of donation to those I have outlined. However, the fact that, unlike the male body, the female body has a material value in human kinship structures as a form of property means that the female saint's participation in celestial economy requires a more explicit redefinition of her worth *as material property*. Moreover, it is precisely because of the material value of the female saint's body that she is able to accrue spiritual value with it. In a similar way to Lawrence's treasure or John's alms, the value of the virgin's body must be redefined in terms of the spiritual economy in which it circulates as a gift.

1.6.2. The Male Body

As I have argued, the definition of the virgin's role within social and spiritual economies needs to be seen alongside the broader renegotiation of notions of value in hagiography. Although the specificity of the female virgin's relationship to social networks should not be overlooked, the renunciative framework which ultimately defines that relationship applies to male as well as female saints. What I will consider in the final section of this chapter is therefore how the value of the male sexual body might also be redefined within economic systems such as those described above. Alexis's refusal to consummate his marriage on the night of his wedding and the implications of this for his involvement in worldly affairs has already been mentioned. I would now like to take another example from the *Vie de saint Julien l'Hospitallier*, which can be used to demonstrate how the value of male (and female) bodies can be reassessed in hagiographic texts and how this value is contingent on a relationship to the material world negotiated through the gift.

As I will suggest, the *Vie de saint Julien l'Hospitallier* demonstrates how male and female involvement in sex/gender systems intersect. Moreover, the ways in which these systems assign roles and identities based on the ascription of value to male and female bodies has a particular function in this saint's life, making Julian's sainthood and his attendant rejection of chivalric identity dependent on his attitude towards his wife as an item of property within his gift. Seen in the light of some of Strathern's claims concerning the performative, relational qualities of gender as it is enacted through the gift, the saint's redefined position within exchange networks towards the end of the

poem amounts to more than simply a refusal to participate in social systems. As I will argue, Julian's role as a masculine donor, as well as his attitude towards the material world more generally, are reworked in the *Vie*, marking a fundamental shift in the way that the saint's identity and sexual positioning are conceived. If, as Strathern suggests, the performance of exchange determines the form that gender takes, Julian's gender is transformed along with his participation in the social networks that define his role as a donor. In a similar way to the female virgin, the male saint thus transcends the role ascribed to him by social systems in order to earn his place in heaven.

Reduced to the essentials, the *Vie de saint Julien l'Hospitallier* is the story of a young nobleman destined to kill his parents.[76] While out hunting in the forest one day, Julian encounters a talking stag that tells him of his parricidal destiny; afraid that the prophecy will come true, Julian embarks on a pilgrimage that takes him far from his parental home. After several years of hardship and service to God, the saint's peregrinations eventually bring him into contact with a noble knight, who criticises him for his poverty and offers to take him on as a paid servant. Julian gives the matter some thought and decides to accept the knight's offer. Having distinguished himself in battle and acquired considerable honour and prestige, Julian marries a rich countess in the lands he has conquered. In the interim, the saint's parents have embarked on a pilgrimage themselves and eventually arrive in Julian's territories, where they hear of his activities and recognise him as their long-lost son. Having approached Julian's wife, the saint's parents are treated with hospitality by the lady, who ensures that they are bathed and offered a change of clothes after their long journey. While they are sleeping in the lady's bed, Julian returns from hunting and, thinking that his wife is in bed with another man, decapitates them both with a single blow of his sword. When the terrible truth emerges, Julian and his wife resolve to go on pilgrimage together. They eventually establish a small hostel by a river, where they care for guests and ferry them across the water. One night, a violent storm blows up; hearing cries from the other side of the river, Julian and his wife decide to offer the pilgrim passage and shelter despite the hazardous conditions. The pilgrim is a leper who makes increasingly demanding claims on the couple's hospitality, eventually requesting that, in order to warm him up, Julian's wife lie next to him in bed, naked. This request is granted but never fulfilled: before the lady can uphold her side of the bargain, the leper disappears. It is then revealed that the leper was Christ and Julian and his wife are forgiven their sins.

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[76] I use Swan's edition of the prose Life.

The male attitude towards the female sexual body as a possession and token of exchange is axiomatic in this story. The murder of Julian's parents is the direct result of the sexual jealousy that drives the saint mercilessly to slaughter what he believes to be his adulterous wife and her lover. Moreover, this sin is at least partially expiated by the redefinition of this attitude towards the female body, as Julian acquiesces to the rather audacious request of the leprous pilgrim that he be allowed to sleep next to Julian's naked wife. Before examining this central theme more closely, however, it should be emphasised that this attitude towards the female body connotes a more general relationship to the material world that is progressively redefined in the poem. The revaluation of the sexual body of Julian's wife accompanies a revaluation of the male saint's situation in social and sexual systems, symbolising the reworking of an attitude to the material world that supports a particular kind of male identity.

The saint's masculinity and its social value are made an issue relatively early on in the poem. Julian's decision to give up his penitential lifestyle for a chivalric existence is based on the negative valuation of his manhood by the knight he meets on the way to St Jacques. When asked what kind of life he leads by the chevalier who has given him shelter, Julian explains that he is a *povres hom* who seeks nothing but food to sustain himself (JH, ll. 284—88). Decidedly unimpressed with this modest reply, Julian's interlocutor tells him precisely what he thinks of such behaviour:

> 'Mauvés estes, fait li sires, qui autre chose ne
> querez, car uns chiens ou une truie trueve assez a mengier.
> Et ce n'est mie grant delit de vivre ausint conme une truie,
> ne nus hom ne vaut riens qui est tot jor en dangier et en
> povreté!'
> (JH, ll. 289—93)[77]

The knight's response to Julian thus suggests that manhood is, quite literally, worthless without wealth and an ability to protect oneself: as he puts it, 'nus hom ne vaut riens qui est tot jor en dangier et en povreté!'. According to this logic, a man's value resides in his ability to surpass purely animal existence and to seek out more than simply enough to sustain himself, as would a dog or a sow. A man who is continually poor and unprotected therefore 'ne vaut riens' – he is without value either as a man or as a human being. Julian's response to this accusation indicates that the knight has misunderstood him: nobody should live simply to fill their own stomach, he retorts, but those who enter the service of God should aim to live frugally (JH, ll. 294—6). Thus as seen in the

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[77] Most of the 13th-century versions have 'com un chien' instead of 'comme une truie' in l. 291. See *Julian*, ed. by Swan.

examples from other saints' lives discussed earlier, Julian suggests that his poverty must be seen in terms of a heavenly system that gives it an alternative value to that which it has on earth; his simple lifestyle, rather than making him equivalent to an animal, is part of what it means to be God's servant.

Unfortunately, this seems to be something that Julian rapidly forgets when the knight offers to take him on as a paid servant. The reasons Julian gives for entering the service of an earthly lord are, firstly, that it makes no sense to do penance for a sin you have yet to commit and, secondly, that in living as a pauper he betrays his noble birth. Julian's thinking as he inwardly debates the matter returns once again to questions of value and social status:

> '[...] Ne
> ne m'en savra ja Diex gré, car je nel faz pour lui. Fox
> fui quant j'entrepris onques tel chose dont je ne puis avoir
> ne pris ne los, ne nus ne me doit prisier se ge sui toutjorz
> truanz ne mandianz, et je en doi avoir grant honte, por ce que
> je sui fiulz de conte et de contesse et li plus gentis hom de
> touz mes encessors. Jamés plus truanz ne serai, car ce est vil
> vie et mauvese, de quoi nus prodons n'a envie. [...]'
> (JH, ll. 314—21)

Julian suggests here that his penance has not been a form of service to God, but a preventive measure that has led him to malign his noble parentage (a parentage to which he implicitly manifests a residual attachment in running away in the first place). In returning to a noble lifestyle, Julian therefore rectifies what he now considers to be a contemptible degradation of his social standing, justifying this decision with a more lengthy rehearsal of the criticisms that have previously been levelled at him by the knight who takes him in. Julian's value as a person is crucially at stake here. The worth of the male body is linked to human systems of kinship that at once contribute to his nobility and demand that he maintain the calibre of his human lineage. The result of neglecting his duties in this regard is a devaluation of his own worth and that of his family: if he continues to wander as a beggar, nobody will have cause to think him of any value (*ne me doit prisier*) and he will be ashamed of his failure to honour his noble birth.

What Julian fails to appreciate here is that the valuation of his manhood that leads him to renounce his life as a beggar involves an attitude to the material and social world that will eventually lead him to commit the parricidal sin he wishes to escape. As Julian's comments demonstrate, his worth as a knight depends fundamentally on recognition and one of the conditions of this recognition is financial independence (as

the knight he meets also makes clear, he cannot be a pauper and a good knight). The interdependence of honour and property is in evidence in Julian's later career both on and off the battlefield. Julian's possessions subsequent to his conversion to the order of secular knighthood represent his military abilities: he is awarded gifts for his prowess and eventually earns himself a noble wife through his achievements. His identity as a knight is therefore dependent on the material world in a fundamental way. What he earns determines and connotes what he is worth.

The saint's wife is an important part of this relationship. She marries Julian (despite the fact that she knows little of his parentage) because he is the best candidate to protect her lands against attack; Julian thus possesses his wife and her lands as further evidence of his prowess. It is, however, this possession that causes problems later on. Julian's jealousy at seeing what he believes to be his wife in bed with another man is, as I have argued, a part of an attitude to property that informs his identity as a knight and lord more generally. The implication of adultery would be a loss of honour that affects Julian's worth as a knight and as a man through the compromised possession of his wife's sexual body, a body that guarantees his lordship over the lands he now owns. Julian's sin is therefore twofold. Certainly, the saint commits the sin of parricide that he has dreaded from the outset, but this double murder is the result of his involvement in a social system that makes his worth as an individual contingent upon an acquisitive impulse that he has favoured over the poverty of his former existence as a beggar. In the course of his self-recriminations, Julian himself suggests that this is the case by lamenting his decision to give up his life as a poor pilgrim; instead of following St Jacques, he has been drawn to the devil and, as he puts it, 'si renié Dieu et vos [St Jacques] et foi et | charité et pelerinage por son servise fere' (JH, ll. 961—2).

The self-interested materialism that Julian implicitly associates with the service he has performed for the devil is redefined in the part of the narrative subsequent to the murder of Julian's parents. Julian's transformation from knight to saint hinges on an alternative attitude towards the material which is symbolised most notably in his position vis-à-vis his wife. Significantly, just before the couple embark on pilgrimage, the countess commends her body to God, claiming that 'ainz | rendrai mon cors a Dieu pour le pechié' (JH, ll. 1012—13); the couple later make a vow of chastity, thereby confirming their relationship to (and in) God (JH, ll. 1077—8). The redefinition of the place of the female sexual body here is similar to that examined in the Lives of the virgin martyrs earlier in this chapter. Julian's wife gives her body to God in a gesture that implicitly recognises its prior ownership *by* God; however, this rendering of the

body – unlike that of the virgin martyr – appears as a direct response to Julian's failure to see the body (as well as other objects) in terms of this prior possession. Moreover, his wife's dedication to God is seen alongside the concomitant redefinition of Julian's place within social networks, as he too embraces the values of poverty and chastity that he has previously maligned.

The culmination of this process of redefinition is the night of the storm, when the leper Julian has ferried across the water asks to be lent (*prester*) his naked wife for the night. Julian's response to this request is telling; for, instead of agreeing to the leper's demand in the name of God, Julian claims that his wife is not his to give:

> Juliens l'ot, si le [the leper] resgarde et li dit:
> 'Frere, je ne l'ai mie en garde por prester. Je
> ai eü mainz d'ostes, et si ne m'en requist onques mes nus
> de ce que vous me requerez, ne je ne quit que ele le feïst
> pas por moi.'
> (JH, ll. 1288—92)

What might have easily been a charitable transaction between men thus becomes something quite different. Julian's response implicitly recognises the prior, divine claim on his wife's body that she has asserted in her dedication to God. Not only does Julian refuse to claim his wife as his property, but he also erases any possibility of this act of charity being performed on his account (*por moi*), an act which would make him the implied owner of his wife's body as well as the recipient of her sacrificial gift. Julian's wife is therefore left to dispose of her body in an act of charity that she performs on God's – as opposed to her husband's – behalf, a detail that is emphasised by the lady herself, when she agrees to sleep next to the leper 'par charité', as a service (*servise*) that she performs in God's name (*pour lui*) (JH, ll. 1293—7). Moreover, the refused exchange between Julian and the leper speaks of an alteration in the saint's attitude towards his wife that affects his own social and sexual positioning. The saint's declaration attests to a shift in his relationship to society implicit in his penitential lifestyle, a shift that makes his value as an individual no longer reliant on the material, sexual and social possessions that contributed to his worth as a knight and lord. In asserting that his wife is not his to give, Julian therefore demonstrates his withdrawal from the social networks and value systems that have previously made his identity as a man dependent on what he owns, inscribing a relationship of non-possession that acknowledges God's greater claim over the bodies of his subjects.

Thus, although it is ostensibly on account of the act of charity agreed to by Julian's wife that the couple are accorded divine pardon, this act depends fundamentally

on a prior renunciation by Julian. The act of charity requires Julian's recognition of a redefined relationship to the material world that ascribes an alternative value not only to his wife's body as an object he no longer possesses but also to his own body as it was socially and sexually defined through such possession. The attitude to the social and physical world that previously determined Julian's status as a knight and that led him accidentally to kill his parents is thus demonstrably replaced. Julian's worth no longer depends on what he owns and the recognition that this ownership entails; instead, it relies on his ability to renounce possession of that which he now recognises was never his in the first place.

The *Vie de saint Julien l'Hospitallier* thus illustrates how male and female identities depend upon the individual's position in social and sexual economy and how this position must be redefined in distinct, yet potentially equivalent ways. Seen alongside the other saints' lives discussed in this chapter, what this example serves to underline is that male saints most often redefine their participation in the world by transforming their roles as donors and tenants of material property; in the case of saints like Julian and Alexis, this material property notably includes their possession of a wife. By contrast, female saints – as well as women like Julian's wife – redefine their status both as donors and as gifts. This, as I have argued, frequently involves a revaluation of the female virgin's physical body, as a treasure caught up in a divine (as opposed to a terrestrial) gift network.

It is within this setting that the complementarity of gender identity and the performance of exchange posited by Strathern potentially plays a crucial part in how gender might be thought about in these texts. The saint's gender emerges within relational contexts that allow it to take shape: it is manifested through the performance of exchange rather than possessed as such. Thus, by maintaining a relationship in which they repeatedly give themselves to God by renouncing the material world, saints of both sexes simultaneously redefine their participation in social networks and transform the way in which their gender signifies. As I have suggested, the reconceptualisation of masculine and feminine identity in saints' lives might therefore be seen as part of a systemic reconfiguration that informs the depiction of economy in saints' lives more broadly: the redefinition of attitudes towards social and material economy in saints' lives is linked to a recontextualisation of identity as it is thought in relation to these economies. My purpose in the next chapter will be to consider in greater detail how such recontextualisations might affect – and potentially queer – the hagiographic treatment of kinship.

2
Kinship

'Mais assez est plus gent garder le pucelage
Et mener sens dangier chastement son eage
Et degerpir por toi parens et yretage.
Ei! Sire, afferme moi ver toi itel corage,
Que toi ne puisse perdre por croistre me linage.'
(Euph, ll. 186—190)

'Soviegne toi, beau Sire, de t'ancele Cristine.
Por toi sui esgaree, por toi sui orpheline,
Por toi lais pere et mere et toute amor terrestre,
Por toi lais je le siecle, por toi vueil je povre estre.
Por toi suis escharnie, por toi sui degabee'
(Cri, ll. 1625—29)

A grant poverte deduit sun grant parage;
Ço ne volt il que sa mere le sacet:
Plus aimet Deu que trestut sun linage.
(Al, ll. 248—50)

As illustrated by the above quotations, saints often give up human kinship as part of the abandonment of the world that brings them closer to Christ, renouncing the emotional and social bonds that establish their material involvement in the world in order to forge more enduring relationships with God. The saint, in giving up his or her mother, father and/or spouse renounces inheritance (*heritage/yretage*) and lineage (*lignage*) along with the social and affective positions that kinship inscribes. Moreover, this self-imposed disinheritance, as pointed out so emphatically above by Christine, is performed for God (*por toi*) and all that he stands for. The saint thus leaves his or her family as an act of devotion to a celestial father who ostensibly surpasses the family members that he or she leaves behind.[1]

At the end of the last chapter I suggested how this renunciation might be part of a more general abandonment of the world contingent upon gender and social position. I will return, briefly, to consider the connection between the renunciative gift and the renunciation of kinship in saints' lives in a moment. As I will argue, kinship needs to be considered within the same economic model as that outlined in Chapter One: the saint gives up terrestrial kinship in order to include him- or herself in a family that transcends

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[1] On instances of saints rejecting their family in early hagiography, see *RTP*, pp. 81—102; Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender*, pp. 26—31 (p. 27); and Graus, *Volk*, pp. 472—77. On the treatment of family relations in hagiography from the 11th to the 17th century, see Weinstein and Bell, *Saints and Society*, pp. 45—7; 62—5; 67—70; 242—46.

human boundaries and norms. However, precisely because of this, the renunciation of kinship raises a series of questions concerning what relationships and desires might be possible outside the social and sexual norms that kinship systems establish in human contexts. In this respect, saints' lives suggest that spiritual kinship has queer potential: it continually extends, exceeds and eludes human classifications, smearing them into one another, making them stretch and overlap. I will explore the implications of the saint's exclusion from social and sexual norms in connection with the work of Jacques Lacan and Judith Butler. The comparable (but very different) work of these two thinkers will provide ways of considering the saint's movement beyond the social limits placed on desire in terms of a death-like liminality; it will also allow an interrogation of the connections between kinship, death and ethics in saints' lives alongside questions of desire and its possible (or impossible) limits.

In order to situate this analysis, I will begin with some reflections on terminology, ideology and critical approach.

2.1. Kinship in Context: Etymologies and Genealogies

Speaking of kinship in saints' lives of this period requires some qualification, not least because of the potential slippage between different medieval and contemporary, English and (Old) French understandings of kinship or *parenté*. In modern French, *parenté* refers to relations of consanguinity, to the juridical relationship between persons related by descent, or it may also refer to a relationship which has no physical basis but is grounded rather in a relationship of protective sponsorship or *parrainage*. The Old French terms *parage* and *parenté* have similar connotations, often referring to a concept of the family which invokes notions of descent (particularly as these are associated with aristocratic genealogy) and inheritance rights. However, these terms also refer to more general forms of alliance which suggest ties *like* those shared with one's blood relatives, while not always being based upon consanguinity. *Parenté* in particular evokes a notion of the family in which one's *parent* can be not only one's father, but also any other member of the family (usually but not always male), or, in the system of spiritual kinship, a godparent or sponsor.[2] Likewise, the related verb *paragier* can mean not only to equal another by birth but also to form alliances of friendship or marriage, while the

[2] See the articles under *parens* in the *FEW*, VII, pp. 643—44; *parenté* in the *AND*, p. 494; *parent, parentage* and *parenté* in TL, VII, pp. 236—41; *parente, parenté* and *parage* in Godefroy, V, pp. 736—38. This would seem to differ from Latin usage (c. 800—1200), where *parentela* only rarely refers to spiritual relations; *proximitas* is the preferred term for spiritual kinship, *cognatio* is more frequently used to express one's relationship to God. See Guerrau-Jalabert, 'La Désignation des relations', esp. pp. 81—92; 96—106.

feminine noun *parentence* can refer to kinship (in the restricted, consanguineous sense) or to alliance outside the kernel of primary kin.

The most basic meaning of 'kinship' as an analytical designation in modern anthropology defines it as the recognition of a relation between persons based on either descent or marriage.[3] Within kinship systems, consanguineous (descent-based) and affinal (marriage-based) relations are related to one another – and, at the same time, crucially distinguished – by the incest taboo, which forbids sexual relations between primary kin and thereby establishes exogamy as a theoretical (if not as a practically observed) imperative. Although the incest taboo is commonly considered to be a universal feature of human societies, the nature of its symbolic function and the relations that it underwrites are nonetheless culturally and historically variable. 'Kinship' thus refers to networks of relations constituted through descent or marriage which describe and determine the individual's position within the context of a wider family or clan structure, a structure that establishes a framework for the regulation and codification of sexual activity by classifying individuals and their relationships to others on the basis of certain sexual prohibitions and proscriptions.

Despite the fact that the meaning of *parenté* in Old French does not entirely conform to the definition of kinship as it is thus defined, there is nonetheless a good deal of common ground between them. My references to kinship in this chapter will be to the system of alliances constituted by descent or marriage, a definition that follows the anthropological model while incorporating some of the sense of medieval notions of *parage* or *parenté*. The more extended notion of *parenté* as a bond of non-consanguineous alliance that invokes family relations while simultaneously extending and modifying them will be dealt with partly in my discussion of spiritual kinship in Section 2.3. The connection between the physical, social and affective dimensions of different notions of *parenté*, especially in relation to spiritual alliance and its role in the formation of Christian kinship, will be developed more comprehensively in Chapter Three, where the association between family and community in hagiographic literature will be explored in greater detail.

It should be remembered that, in addition to the variation in usage of words such as *parenté*, the lexis of terms relating to descent and marriage in Old French (and, more specifically, to the language as it evolves in twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts) refers to shifting definitions of how the relationships embraced by these terms are constituted within certain discourses, at different times and in different regions. The definition of

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[3] This definition follows that of Stone in *Kinship and Gender*, p. 5.

kinship as I have outlined it above should be considered against a backdrop of often shifting and unstable ideologies of kinship that developed over the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, ideologies that redefined marital and consanguineous relations within the legal and theological writings of the Church, and through the reorganisation of the aristocratic family.

Although there is a certain amount of disagreement over the nature and significance of the shifts taking place in the definition of kinship in the twelfth century, scholars seem to concur that important changes were made to the idea both of marriage and of the family during that time. Changes to marital practice and family organisation were made partly as a result of social, economic and political pressures, yet they also involved certain developments in the role of the Church in western Europe. In northern French contexts, Georges Duby has argued that major shifts in the institution of marriage took place as the result of a conflict between two models of marriage: that of the Church and that of the laity (meaning the lay aristocracy). Although contesting Duby's theory of the two models, Christopher Brooke has also suggested that the concept of marriage was profoundly revised in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as it increasingly came under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities (a shift that he claims was based in the compatibility, rather than the antagonism, of lay and Church interests).[4] This legal definition of marriage was founded upon certain conceptions of the family and the identities that it produced. In the eyes of the Church, marriage (as a consensual and sexual union) was one of the defining features of a lay population seen in contradistinction to a celibate clergy. The clergy's role in enforcing, endorsing and pronouncing upon marriage thus went hand-in-hand with clerical abstention from it, an abstention that increasingly distinguished between lay and clerical *ordo*.[5] From the point of view of the lay aristocracy, marriage was most frequently sought as a means of

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[4] As Brooke points out, by the middle of the 12th century, Church courts were responsible for most issues pertaining to the validity and legal qualities of marriage, although lay courts determined all issues of inheritance. However, as Brundage's work on 12th-century marriage law indicates, canon law was itself evolving new concepts of marriage that would have influenced its legal definition. See Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage*, pp. 119—72; Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law*, pp. 70—97, 'Marriage and Sexuality', and 'Concubinage and Marriage'. Both articles are reprinted under their original page numbers in *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages*.

[5] The insistence on clerical celibacy – indeed, its legal imposition – was felt to be important for the institutional status of the Church. The reforms that took place under Pope Gregory VII (1073—85) suggest that clerical abstention from marriage (and women *tout court*) was considered imperative to the spiritual and moral authority of the Church and thus to the example that was supposed to be set by what was increasingly seen as a clerical élite. Although the significance of these reforms should not be overemphasised (clerical celibacy had been an issue since at least the 5th century and attempts to impose it on the clergy were perennial features of Church reform) they are significant insofar as they associated refusal of marriage with a clerical identity that (re-)emerges with particular ideological force in the 11th century, an identity that continues to be discussed and problematised in the 12th and 13th centuries. See Brundage, 'Sexuality, Marriage and the Reform of Christian Society'; Goody, *The Development of the Family*; McNamara 'The Herrenfrage'; and D. Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*.

inheriting estates or kingdoms and of consolidating alliances of political and social value. In addition to providing a forum for a type of sexual activity that had both religious and social legitimacy, marriage was also therefore at the heart of the material and spiritual definition of the family as a space of non-clerical, dynastic identity.

As other historians have indicated, this movement towards a legal environment for marriage determined by the Church is seen alongside demographic shifts that forced certain changes to family structure, particularly within aristocratic circles.[6] As far as consanguineous kinship was concerned, it has been suggested that the eleventh and twelfth centuries saw an intensified awareness in aristocratic circles of the family as dynastic unit based on its own territory.[7] The reorganisation of kinship in the aristocratic family came largely as the result of the disappearance of a system of large domains around the millennium; networks of aristocratic alliance were modified in order to adapt to this shift in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Possibly in response to these changes, the twelfth-century aristocracy introduced new ways of naming and symbolising itself in relation to the family. Families came to use patronyms as well as first names, they acquired their own heraldic devices, they traced (and copied down) their genealogical history through real or fictive male ancestors.

R. Howard Bloch has suggested that these developments have consequences for our interpretation of medieval narrative in this period: French texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are, he argues, 'anthropological spaces' in which the genealogical structures governing contemporary medieval ideological and institutional practices can be read.[8] In *Etymologies and Genealogies*, Bloch thus attempts to demonstrate how the consolidation of the aristocratic family around the notion of linear descent is concomitant with the development of what he terms a 'biopolitics of lineage': a post-eleventh-century ideology of the family that privileged vertical as opposed to horizontal relations of kinship, thereby promoting an awareness of the family as an institution that develops over time.[9] This biopolitical awareness, argues Bloch, is itself informed by early medieval grammatical models developed in historical and etymological discourse, as well as in contemporary writings on Biblical exegesis and sacramental theology:

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[6] For a general survey of European shifts (with particularly attention paid to Italy) see Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, pp. 79—111; for France see Duby, *Le Chevalier*; for Germany see Leyser, 'The German Aristocracy'.

[7] Duby, 'Structures de parenté et noblesse'; Guerrau-Jalabert, 'Sur les structures de parenté', esp. pp. 1038—45; Herlihy, *Medieval Households*, pp. 82—98.

[8] R. H. Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies* and 'Genealogy as a Medieval Mental Structure'.

[9] Bloch's study is in this sense clearly influenced by Foucault's approach to the study of discourse in his work on the penal system and on the history of sexuality in the classical period. See esp. *Histoire de la sexualité*, I and II.

> For it can be shown that an essentially verbal model, which lay at the center of a prevailing epistemological mode, worked not only to define the family ideologically but to found a more global pattern of social relations and to bolster a strategy of political hegemony operative until the time of the Revolution.[10]

Developing this argument through an exploration of the interaction between grammatical, familial and literary modes in a range of twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts, Bloch goes on to argue that the genealogical model adopted by the aristocratic family as a means of articulating itself as a historical, dynastic unit, finds its fullest endorsement in genres such as genealogical narrative and epic poetry. The most consummate challenge to this ideal appears in the lyric, which gives voice to forms of language and adulterous desire that disrupt the foundations of genealogy. Finally, Bloch claims that the problematisation of the genealogical model finds a privileged setting in works of courtly romance, which mediate between the modes of symbolisation found in grammatical theory and the discourse of the family, while setting this dialogue in the context of a self-conscious literary practice.

Bloch's study is an extraordinarily wide-ranging exploration of an epistemological model that clearly influences the conception and symbolisation of relationships of many different kinds in medieval discourse. Indeed, where his argument is most compelling is in making suggestive links between the appropriation and development of genealogical metaphors in a range of interwoven symbolic practices. One important feature of Bloch's argument nevertheless needs to be examined more closely. His analysis suggests that the literary development in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of a genealogical model rooted in early medieval linguistic theory took shape around an enhanced awareness of aristocratic family identity. According to Bloch's argument, it is ostensibly *this* ideology of the family (as well as the linguistic model with which it is in dialogue) that is eulogised, interrogated or contested in high medieval literature. Seen from this perspective, the 'literary anthropology' envisaged by Bloch seems to presume that the genealogical model embodied in medieval kinship networks has a privileged status in the literary imagination with which it is contemporary. Social and symbolic practices thus conveniently intersect.

Overlooking the fact that the fit between theory and practice might not always be quite so neat, this assumption tends to rule out the possibility of coexisting ideologies of the family which inform and/or compete with one another. In this respect, the absence of any extensive analysis of saints' lives in Bloch's study is a telling omission. Bloch's only mention of saints' lives is made in order to connect the saint's refusal of

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[10] R. H. Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, pp. 64—65.

sexuality (a refusal that he rightly claims disrupts the continuity of human lineage) with the 'antigenealogical' disruptions of language and desire that he associates with the troubadour love lyric.[11] By contrast, in considering the discourse of kinship in hagiography, my contention will be that saints' lives do not simply disrupt a particular ideology of the (human) family: these texts also develop alternative models of kinship that elaborate patterns of descent and affiliation of their own. In so doing, hagiographic literature provides a narrative space in which the grammatical and exegetical models described by Bloch are manipulated to produce an altogether different symbolisation of genealogy, a genealogy which runs parallel to and parodies that of the secular family while attempting simultaneously to displace it.

2.2. Kinship and the Gift

In advocating the rejection of human kinship, saints' lives endorse the New Testament claim that, in matters of devotion to God, a man's foes will be of his own household: that, in other words, love of God is compromised by other forms of love based upon human kinship.[12] The framing of this conflict of interest as a tension between household and love of God suggests that the socio-economic as well as the affective dimensions of human kinship are explicitly at issue in such matters of devotion, a tension that is clearly in evidence in vernacular saints' lives of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As will already be implicit from my discussion in the previous chapter, kinship and the gift are in this sense closely linked in the lives of saints. These texts are frequently preoccupied with questions regarding the material and the affective dimensions of the individual's place in social networks, particularly as this concerns the family. As argued in Chapter One, tokens that connote the saint's involvement in human systems in hagiography are renounced in a worldly context in order to maintain and reinforce his or her relation to God. Similarly, in the context of human kinship, the material markers of the saint's status within the family (markers such as inheritance and property) and the roles that those markers serve to reinforce must be given up for God.

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[11] R. H. Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies*, pp. 180—82.

[12] Matthew 10. 34—37: 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes will be of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' These words are mentioned explicitly in the Oxford version of the *Vie de saint Alexis*: 'mais d'icele ewangile li ramembret sovent | ki plus aimet ne pere ne mere ne parent | ne terre ne mollier, onor ne casement | ke moi, dist nostre sires, ne mon commandement | non est dignes de moi ne a moi ne s'atent.' See *Alexis*, ed. by Stebbins, ll. 191—95. The Scriptural injunction to leave one's family is also mentioned in Matthew 19. 29 and Luke 14. 26. Augustine also reproduces this teaching: 'Of True Religion (*De Vera Religione*)', in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, pp. 218—83 (pp. 270—71).

What should therefore be underlined in relation to kinship as well as in relation to the broader material economy of saints' lives is the inseparability of systemic and specific values in both the material and non-material gifts that the saint renounces in human contexts. Just as the saint's renunciation of material property is a renunciation of the human economy in which that property circulates, so the saint's rejection of (for instance) his or her parents is never simply the repudiation of the human couple that brought him or her into the world. For the saint, to reject one's parents is to reject the specific *and* the generic significance of these roles: at the same time as he or she renounces his or her father and mother, the saint gives up the human system that assigns those roles as well as the property structures and affective ties which that system inscribes. Thus, when a saint rejects his or her father, mother, or spouse, these designations are to be understood both as they refer to specific individuals and also as they represent generic terms that signify within the broader symbolic, material and emotional structures of the human society that the saint leaves behind.

Two examples will serve to illustrate how kinship functions in the narrative economy of hagiography in this respect. One obvious way in which kinship is implicated in the parallel economic systems of hagiography is in relation to questions of property and inheritance. The saint, by repudiating human kin relations and the material status that relies on those relations, enters into a close relationship with God that provides a more enduring, celestial inheritance. This kind of rejection is clearly perceptible in the case of Alexis, where, as mentioned in Chapter One, the saint renounces symbolically both kinship and property in the gifts that he confers on his estranged wife on the night of his departure, thereby frustrating the dynastic ambitions of his family, who are keen to see him established as their heir. However, other saints perform almost identical 'gifts' and, like Alexis, are similarly rewarded with a heavenly inheritance that supplants the human inheritance they have left behind.[13]

St Richard, Bishop of Chichester, is a case in point.[14] Although undoubtedly more famous for that episode in his Life when he is miraculously saved from certain death beneath a loose piece of Oxford University masonry, Richard also provides a good example of how the renunciation of kinship and property in the material world can result in the acquisition of celestial inheritance. Aware from an early age of his religious vocation, Richard finds himself in a position not unlike that of Alexis in that he must refuse certain worldly gifts that might compromise that calling. While Richard is still a

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[13] Cf. Dominic's bequest to his fellow monks of a celestial inheritance, a gift that he is able to perform on account of the fact he has nothing to give in material terms. *Dominic*, ed. by Manning, ll. 3913—4058.
[14] Pierre d'Abernon, *Richard*, ed. by Russell.

young man, he interrupts his studies to go and help his struggling elder brother to manage the lands he has inherited. As a result, Richard is offered land by his brother – which he graciously accepts – and is encouraged to make a good marriage by his kinsmen. Richard soon sees that this situation is untenable in that his brother clearly frowns upon his decision to remain an unmarried landowner. Richard's response is therefore to return to his brother the land and the charter that legally secures its transferral and to encourage his brother to accept the wife that Richard cannot bring himself to marry (Ri, ll. 307—12). This act of renunciation has the double effect of liberating Richard to pursue his studies once again and of enabling him to seek an inheritance of more enduring value:

> '[...]
> Veez ci la terre, tute vus rent
> E votre chartre ou tut ensement,
> E la pucele, se il plest a li,
> E si il plest a ces amis ausi,
> Kar nettement pur mei la poez aver,
> Kar unkes pur mei n'out un beser.'
> Richard dunkes est revenu
> En l'esperance k'aveit einz eu,
> E atent d'aver cum sage
> En ciel pardurable eritage,
> Ke plus terren ne desira
> (Ri, ll. 307—17)

As in the *Vie de saint Alexis*, the saint therefore sacrifices the material and social gifts offered to him as confirmation of his identity within terrestrial kinship systems in order to acquire a more enduring spiritual inheritance as a servant of God.[15] Richard's refusal of a wife takes place within a context of a more general renunciation of items transferred within a network of property and kin relations. The saint first renders that which compels him to marry in the form of the land that has been given to him and the document which secures its legal tenure; then, as a continuation of the same gesture – a continuation expressed through the extended action of the verb *rendre* – Richard gives back the girl who would be his wife. Just as the charter secures the legal transfer of the land, Richard's insistence on the purity of the girl, on her consent to the offer he makes and, likewise, on the consent of her *amis* (meaning both her kinsmen and friends or supporters) ensures that Richard's brother may legitimately accept the girl as his own.[16]

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[15] On ascesis as a mode of nuptiality in the Lives of Edmund and Richard of Chichester see *SLWLC*, pp. 176—9.

[16] The reference to the consent of the girl would have emphasised the legality of the transfer in the eyes of the Church in this period. By the 12th century, mutual consent was commonly emphasised by the ecclesiastical authorities as one of the bases for legitimate marriage and was established as such in canon law. Richard's emphasis of the consent of the girl's *amis* reinforces this legitimacy by making the proposed marriage a legal

More importantly what the poem thus emphasises is how, in giving up a wife, Richard also gives up a network of interconnected relationships to people and property. The saint not only renounces his bride and the social connections that he would acquire through that alliance but also gives up the legal tenure of the land that makes him marriageable in the first place, thereby redefining his connections to his own family. It is in this sense significant that the opposition established as a result of this series of interwoven rejections is that between *pardurable eritage* and *terren eritage*, each of these forms of inheritance representing the eventual outcomes of alternative systems in which kinship and property relations are construed as inseparable from one another.

An example of similar contrasts is found in Gautier de Coinci's *Vie de sainte Cristine*, where the saint casts off her human mother and father in order to devote herself to her celestial father and bridegroom, Christ.[17] In response to her mother's entreaty that she should be reconciled with her pagan father and his gods, Christine replies,

> '[...]
> Ce sont vaines paroles, ce sont vaines criees,
> Car j'ai toutes amours por celui oubliees
> Qui dit, pere ne mere, n'a ung seul mot nului,
> Ne son cors proprement, n'aint nus tant comme lui.
> C'est le souverain Sire, c'est le soverain Perez.
> [...]
> Mon non ensuit le sien, et je si l'ensuvrai
> Que de pere et de mere por lui me consuvrai
> Et d'umain heritage, dont lez chaitis s'eritent
> Qui por l'aise du cors les ames deseritent.
> (Cri, ll. 1311—15; 1323—26)

In this speech, Christine articulates what is at stake in the discourse of kinship and inheritance encountered in other saints' lives. As with Richard, her repudiation of human kinship is part of a more general rejection of the world as a sphere in which the finite mortality of the body and of material forms of inheritance is privileged over spiritual concerns. By rejecting her human kin, Christine claims God as a site of absolute emotional fulfilment, reasserting the kinship that she has renounced by placing it in the context of her Christian faith and the relationships that it engenders. God is at once her beloved, her lord and her father. More importantly, God is also her benefactor:

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betrothal with both ecclesiastical and familial support (which would not, strictly speaking, have been necessary to guarantee the legal validity of the marriage). For an examination of the place of consent in the preliminaries to marriage and in the marriage ritual itself in French and Anglo-Norman contexts from the 11th to the 14th century see Molin and Mutembe, *Le Rituel du mariage*, esp. pp. 30—32, and 49—76. See also Brooke, *The Medieval Idea of Marriage*; and Brundage 'Marriage and Sexuality'.

[17] Gautier de Coinci, *Christine*, ed. by Collet.

the saint gives up her *umain heritage* both in recognition of an alternative descendence from Christ (a descendence made evident in her name) and as a claim to the spiritual inheritance that her assertion of this affiliation promises.

Christine's words condense effectively some of the concerns of this chapter in that her discourse not only invokes the dyadic model outlined in Chapter One, demonstrating how kin relations are implicated in the broader economic frameworks of hagiography, but also illustrates how the inclusion of kinship in this model potentially renders problematic the normative function that kinship systems are supposed to have. By virtue of its operation within a setting where human rules no longer apply, the kinship that Christine asserts with God is a kinship beyond human norms: Christine loves God as her father, lord and lover and her desire for him replaces her relationship to *both* of her parents. The notion that, by virtue of his or her dedication to God, the saint participates in a system beyond the boundaries of human laws will already be familiar from my discussion of spiritual economy and the shift in perception that an understanding of this economy implicitly requires. However, as Christine's example suggests, what is specific about the place of *kinship* within this framework is the fact that moving outside human kinship systems into a sphere of alternative relations involves stepping beyond the boundaries that such systems place upon the identities and desires that kinship helps to secure. This is similarly implicit in the example taken from Richard's Life, where the desires of and for terrestrial inheritance and marriage are redirected towards *pardurable eritage*. What the Lives of Richard and Christine encourage the reader to see is how what superficially appears to be the refusal of a human spouse, father, mother or inheritance is a refusal of the bases of human law as these are constituted by systems of kinship and the affective, material, sexual and social norms that those systems set in place. The question that Christine's speech raises is therefore what desire is possible – or necessary – in a system which lacks the temporal, emotional and economic boundaries set by human social systems?

2.3. Kinship and Desire

Anthropologists have long pointed out that kinship systems are frameworks in which social relations are organised according to the restrictions placed on both sexual intercourse and sexual desire. The most fundamental of these restrictions, as I have mentioned, is generally acknowledged to be the incest taboo, a taboo concerned chiefly with consanguineous or descent-based relationships which prohibits sexual relations and

desires between primary kin such as mothers and sons, fathers and daughters and brothers and sisters.[18]

The foundational role of the incest taboo as a prerequisite of human social organisation has been one of its defining qualities in certain strains of anthropological and psychoanalytic discourse. Claude Lévi-Strauss famously asserted that the incest taboo is that which distinguishes human beings from the rest of the animal kingdom; this primary sexual prohibition provides a structural basis for the circulation of women and goods outside the restricted family and thus lays the foundation stone of all human cultural life.[19] According to Lévi-Strauss, the incest taboo is thus situated on the theoretical boundary between human and animal, nature and culture:

> Règle qui étreint ce qui, dans la société, lui est le plus étranger; mais, en même temps, règle sociale qui retient, dans la nature, ce qui est susceptible de la dépasser; la prohibition de l'inceste est, à la fois, au seuil de la culture, dans la culture, et, en un sens [...] la culture elle-même.[20]

The incest taboo thus marks the boundaries of human cultural life. It not only saturates culture, it also defines its outer limit, or threshold: the point at which culture and nature both part company and brush indiscreetly against one another. The incest taboo's foundational status resides in precisely this ability to distinguish between, on the one hand, organised sexual behaviour and social existence and, on the other hand, forms of sexuality and existence that lack such regulation and that therefore align themselves with uncultured animality. Lévi-Strauss's point here is not that non-incestuous mating necessarily leads to cultural complexity,[21] but rather to suggest that the *prohibition* of incest – as a retrospective proscription made from a position within the law – is the foundation of the systemic organisation of reproduction through kinship. One might therefore argue that the incest taboo, in its function as what might be termed a myth of social origin, is 'primary' and 'foundational' by virtue of being the point of reference for the rearticulation of the laws through which sexual behaviour is described, regulated and recodified.

Freud's account of the emergence of the incest taboo in *Totem and Taboo* similarly emphasises its foundational quality. Like Lévi-Strauss, Freud connects the prohibition of incest to the regulation of human sexuality within the law; however, for

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[18] Stone, *Kinship and Gender*, pp. 48—53; Fox, *Kinship and Marriage*; Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women'; D. E. Brown, *Human Universals*.
[19] Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires*. Cf. Herlihy's suggestion that the early medieval redefinition of incest taboos resulted in (among other things) the mandatory circulation of women among households and across kindreds: 'Making Sense of Incest'.
[20] Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures élémentaires*, pp. 13—14.
[21] This is Fox's misunderstanding in *Kinship and Marriage*.

Freud, this law is established through an act of sexually-motivated violence directed against the father, an act which gives rise to a radical subjection to paternal authority (as it is embodied – or disembodied – in the law). Freud ventures that the father – who has sexual monopoly over women in the primal horde – is the focus of profoundly ambivalent feelings on the part of his sons, who detest him for opposing their sexual desires and yearning for power, yet simultaneously love and admire him for precisely this opposition. The father is eventually killed and eaten by his sons, who thereby hope to gain access to the maternal group. However, what results from this murder is not the abolition of paternal law, but a more rigid subjection to that law through the establishment of the incest taboo. Having realised their identification with the father, the sons are overcome by guilt and submit to the incest taboo in a gesture of contrition, giving up the women they have taken from their father as an act that reinstates and reinforces the paternal authority which denied them access to these women in the first place. The prohibition of incest (between mother and son) thus transforms the patricide and the guilt retroactively associated with it into a legal prohibition of the incestuous desire for the mother that was at the origin of the father's death at the hands of his sons.[22]

For Freud, as for Lévi-Strauss, the incest taboo is therefore situated on a crucial borderline, defining human social and sexual organisation by representing that which they must incorporate through exclusion. The act of transgression marks the limit of the law: it acts as a defining threshold, establishing the law in the form of its suspension. It is perhaps to be expected that the accounts of the incest taboo given by Lévi-Strauss and Freud have come in for a great deal of criticism on empirical grounds;[23] but to focus on the verifiability of the arguments of Freud or Lévi-Strauss is, in a sense, to miss the point.[24] Whether or not one subscribes to these views of the origins of the incest taboo and its role in social formation, these accounts serve to highlight the relationship between the prohibition of certain kinds of desire and the formation of legal and social frameworks on the basis of those prohibitions. The value of such models lies primarily

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[22] Freud, 'Totem and Taboo'. Freud later developed this model in relation to his account of the evolution of monotheistic religion (most notably Christianity) in 'Moses and Monotheism'.

[23] The anthropological critique of Freud's theory, which crystallised in the dispute over the universality of the Œdipus complex, had a profound influence on the relationship between anthropology and psychoanalysis. The debate took shape in the 1920s and initially concerned a disagreement between the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, who suggested that difference in family structure caused variation in psychic structure, and the psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, who argued that psychoanalysis was a universal theory that was not culturally determined. See Coward, 'On the Universality of the Œdipus Complex'. For an example of the sort of criticism levelled at Lévi-Srauss's argument see Terray's critique of *Les Structures élémentaires* in 'Langage, société, histoire'.

[24] Patterson has suggested otherwise. See 'Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch'.

in their ability as myths of social origin to disclose the structure of the laws that regulate social and sexual behaviour, enabling a more careful consideration of the possible relationships between kinship, desire and prohibition.

2.3.1. Lacan and Butler

This was the spirit in which Lacan reinterpreted Freud's theory of the primal horde, using his work as a springboard for the elaboration of a theory of ethics. Freud's argument is closely related to his development of the notion of the Œdipus complex, which posits almost identical relationships to those outlined in the theory of the primal horde between transgressive violence, incestuous desire and prohibition. One of the ways in which Lacan elaborates these elements of Freud's thought is through his discussion of Antigone in Seminar VII, where he explores the processes that establish the law through the incest taboo from the perspective of the dissolution of the law (as opposed to its foundation). Unlike Œdipus, her father, Antigone does not commit incest, she is the product of it; in choosing to defend the œdipal genealogy of which she is inevitably a part, she does not subject herself to symbolic law but rather exposes the threshold that constitutes and shapes that law.

It is worth explaining Lacan's appropriation and development of Freudian myth here in more detail, particularly as his theory concerns issues that I will consider in relation to hagiography, most notably the relationship between incestuous desire, death and ethics. Lacan's discussion of Antigone appears in the penultimate section of his seminar of 1959—60 on the ethics of psychoanalysis, and is clearly intended to illustrate a question that he locates at the heart of this ethics: 'avez-vous agi conformément au désir qui vous habite?'.[25] As Lacan's reading of Antigone makes clear, this desire is opposed to a traditional ethics based upon *le bien* (meaning the good of the city, of society as a whole). To act in conformity with your desire – as Antigone does – is thus to reject human ethical laws as they are socially defined and to enter a zone in which those laws no longer apply. This zone is what Lacan terms 'le champ de l'Autre':[26] a space separate from human systems that enables the subject to inhabit and perceive those systems from a position located outside them. Thus, Lacan claims:

> [...] pour Antigone, la vie n'est abordable, ne peut être vécu et réfléchie, que de cette limite où déjà elle a perdu la vie, où déjà elle est au-delà – mais de là, elle peut la voir, la vivre sous la forme de ce qui est perdu.[27]

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[25] Lacan, *L'Éthique*, p. 362.
[26] Lacan, *L'Éthique*, p. 323.
[27] Lacan, *L'Éthique*, p. 326.

By being situated outside human law, Antigone is also situated outside life as it would usually be defined and experienced. As a result, she is forced to experience her life at its limit: to live it as if she were already dead. Antigone thus exemplifies what is, in Lacanian terms, life between two deaths (*l'entre-deux-morts*): life that exists in the gap between biological death and symbolic death (which is synonymous with life outside the symbolic order, in the dimension of the Lacanian Real).[28]

At the end of his commentary on the Sophoclean play, Lacan gives an account of Antigone's desire and its relationship to kinship. In the closing paragraphs of the third, and final, lecture on Antigone, Lacan claims that she incarnates a desire for death as such. This desire is the desire of the Other, linked by Lacan to the desire of the mother: the founding desire of the structure of the family and a criminal desire associated with the incestuous nature of the œdipal genealogy that Antigone participates in and chooses to defend. What Lacan suggests is that, in remaining true to a desire that aligns itself with a kinship opposed to social law,[29] Antigone enters the space between two deaths as an act that establishes and preserves intact the boundaries of the family itself. The fact that the social body refuses to incorporate the crime that Antigone assumes as her own means that she is required to sacrifice her own being in order to maintain the being of the family as it is defined by its limit (*Atè*).[30] Antigone's legacy is, Lacan suggests, to perpetuate, eternalise and immortalise that limit by desiring the death that lies both at and just beyond its border.

It should be emphasised that Antigone's act is, for Lacan, quintessentially ethical not simply because she chooses to sacrifice herself but because she does so in a way that situates her outside the symbolic law. As Zupančič points out,

> [Lacan situates] the ethical act in a dimension which is neither the dimension of the law (in the usual, sociojuridical sense of the word) nor the dimension of the simple transgression of the law [...], but that of the Real.[31]

The desire that Antigone incarnates is entirely alien to that which comfortably situates the subject in the domain of heteronomy, it is aligned with a dimension indifferent to

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[28] Žižek has explained the distinction between the two deaths in the following terms: 'The very existence of the symbolic order implies a possibility of its radical effacement, of 'symbolic death' – not the death of the so-called 'real object' in its symbol, but the obliteration of the signifying network itself'. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, p. 132. In relation to the Lacanian Antigone, this might be supplemented by pointing out that this 'obliteration' (which characterises the 1st death) does not amount to a disappearance of the signifying network but an indifference to it that deprives it of regulatory power. See also Zupančič, *The Ethics of the Real*, esp. pp. 57—8 and 252—55.

[29] This opposition would have two dimensions: Antigone defends a brother who is not only the product of an incestuous union between Œdipus and his mother/wife Jocasta, but who also attacks the city and therefore outlaws himself as one who is actively opposed to *le bien*.

[30] Lacan, *L'Éthique*, p. 283.

[31] Zupančič, *The Ethics of the Real*, p. 58.

such a domain, a dimension where the only possible contact with the law (the domain of the symbolic, of *le bien*) is in the form of something already lost. The ethical nature of Antigone's act is in her alignment with this dimension, an alignment that confirms her indifference to the law and that signals her symbolic annihilation.

As a counterpoint to Lacan's argument, I would like to consider Judith Butler's recent work on Antigone, which brings to the fore certain questions pertinent to my analysis of hagiography.[32] Butler's reinterpretation of the figure of Antigone is a critique of the readings of the Sophoclean heroine proposed by Hegel and Lacan. Her criticism of Lacan is an attempt to rethink the relationship he posits between kinship, desire and social order in political terms, especially as this concerns gender and sexual politics. Butler's critique is in fact concerned both with Lacan's reading of Antigone and with the project of psychoanalytic discourse more generally, these branches of her argument being closely intertwined. Firstly, Butler argues that because psychoanalysis conceptualises social order as an archetypal symbolic structure, it posits forms of kinship that remain essentially invariable. Moreover, the universalising effect of the symbolic requires the evacuation of those social arrangements that do not conform to the reified symbolic model that psychoanalysis claims to be universal. The symbolic account of kinship proposed by psychoanalysis is thus severed from the social in such a way as to foreclose any radical challenge to the stability of psychoanalytic universality by social elements that do not quite fit the model it supports.

In her critique of the Lacanian reading of Antigone, Butler thus reclaims Antigone as a figure that challenges the foundational principles of psychoanalytic discourse. In Butler's argument, Antigone is an embodiment of 'kinship trouble': she represents an unclassifiable deformation of kinship that throws symbolic regimes into crisis. Because Antigone is the product of incest, terms that would usually describe her position within a reified model of kinship (terms such as 'sister', 'daughter' or 'aunt') are constantly confused; this confusion, Butler argues, calls attention to the forms of kinship that are excluded by the symbolic model Antigone is being defined against. Antigone's example is therefore a demonstration of what occurs when social relations are formed in ways that might challenge the symbolic positions secured by the incest taboo and the kin relations that it establishes as normal.

In relation to Lacan's argument, Butler therefore attempts to refuse the absolute division that she points to in his argument between life as it is lived within the symbolic order and life between two deaths. She criticises Lacan on the basis that, in his reading,

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[32] Butler, *Antigone's Claim*.

any modification of the symbolic structures that regulate psychic and social life is made impossible by the fact that the point at which one 'dies' symbolically is a point of no return. Antigone might live her life as if she were already dead, at a point beyond symbolic regimes, but she is unable to change those symbolic systems from which she is thereby excluded. In Lacan's account, any transformation of the norm is therefore foreclosed by the second death, which simply serves to confirm the limit that it transgresses. By contrast, what Antigone represents for Butler is a point of symbolic disturbance that reveals how the symbolic is limited by the interdictions that ground its establishment and intelligibility. Butler thus argues for a dynamic relationship between the symbolic and that which it excludes, claiming that this confusion points to a place where symbolic structures such as those established by the psychoanalytic account of family romance can be critiqued and transformed.[33]

Butler – perhaps deliberately – overlooks the fact that much of her critique of Lacan is already implicit in *L'Éthique*. Lacan's articulation of the role of psychoanalysis deliberately underscores its normative (and fundamentally unethical) position as a practice aligned with the *bien* as opposed to the space of death and desire associated with Antigone. Indeed, what is most interesting in Butler's argument is not, in my view, her use of Antigone as a figure that opposes and disrupts the social norms that psychoanalysis helps to establish. Where Butler's argument is more useful is in its use of Antigone as a model of the *troubling social repressed* in psychoanalytic discourse and, more specifically, in its insistence on the fact that what is repressed might have a transformative effect on the repressive structure itself. Thus, the social, rather than being an oppressive repository of normative relations, is instead characterised by Butler as a site of possible resistance to the psychic norms that condition social behaviour.

2.3.2. Kinship, Incest and Death in Hagiography

For the purposes of the argument I am making here, what is of primary concern in the readings mentioned above are the ways they associate kinship, desire and the law. My discussion of incestuous desire in saints' lives will focus primarily on how Lacan and Butler, through their respective readings of Antigone, draw connections between death and desire. In both accounts, incestuous, illegitimate, 'unliveable' desire pertains to a space of exclusion and death: the normative function of human kinship and the limits that it places upon desire are overcome (and re-established) by what is considered to be

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[33] This resembles a critique that Butler voices elsewhere in her discussion of Freud and Foucault in *The Psychic Life of Power*, pp. 83—105.

a form of death-in-life that marks the boundaries of social acceptability. For Lacan, this death-in-life is the zone between two deaths: the ethical space of Antigonean desire into which most of us can cross only briefly, if at all. This living death is aligned with the criminal desire that marks the boundaries of the family, boundaries that challenge the laws associated with the utilitarian underpinnings of social life. For Butler, this death-in-life is a life outside the normative forms of kinship and desire established by the incest taboo, a zone which, unlike that described by Lacan, provides a space in which liveable forms of kinship might be rethought and redefined.

Twelfth- and thirteenth-century French saints' lives are often unusually frank in their treatment of issues relating to the interface between kinship, desire and death.[34] In hagiography of this period it is relatively easy to find representations of spaces between life and death that share certain structural similarities with the liminal spaces theorised by Butler and Lacan.[35] Saints conventionally reject what Lacan might term the pathology of *le bien* by refusing to submit themselves to the limiting, mundane regulation of human systems. This self-imposed exile from human society and the laws that it inscribes radically alienates the saint, associating him or her with a sphere outside life as it is normally lived and experienced. As seen in Chapter One, the saint thus frequently inhabits human social 'reality' from a position outside human laws, living life as if he or she were already dead. This deathlike liminality is, furthermore, associated with forms of desire that elude straightforward classification within the human systems towards which saints express their indifference. The saint inhabits a border zone between human society and its ostensibly superior heavenly counterpart in which kinship and desire are reconfigured along celestial as opposed to terrestrial lines, a reconfiguration that involves conceptualising kinship and desire outside normal human restrictions. It is in this shadow-land of queer, unliveable kinship and desire that the saint lives his or her life in anticipation of physical death, a death that, unlike that of Antigone, will supposedly lead to another, better life.

As will be clear from this short description, the Christian ethos of these texts means that there are, of course, important differences between the hagiographic depiction of kinship and its relationship to death, and the Lacanian or Butlerian account of this relationship. But I would like to underline the fact that, despite these disparities,

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[34] On the space between two deaths in saints' lives, see Kay, 'The Sublime Body of the Martyr' and *Courtly Contradictions*, pp. 216—31. For discussion of how this relates to saints' iconography, see Mills, 'A Man Is Being Beaten'. For a non-psychoanalytic discussion of desire in saints' lives, see Vitz, 'Narrative Analysis and the Quest for the Sacred Subject' and *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology*, pp. 126—48.

[35] Although not usually interested in questions of desire, others have mentioned the importance of liminality in saints' lives. See, for example, Elliott's discussion of the saint as liminal hero: *RTP*, pp. 168—80.

hagiography often *does* define an ethical space situated between life and death and that this space is used as a position from which kinship and the ethical systems of human society might be reassessed in relation to an alternative set of ethical norms. Moreover, what is at stake in the shift from terrestrial to celestial kinship is not simply the privileging of spiritual community over human relationships; this shift also implicitly involves privileging a set of relations that sanctions forms of desire which the human kinship rejected in saints' lives does not.

Hagiography's engagement with incestuous forms of kinship and desire provides a vantage point from which to consider the relation between death, desire and kinship. Of those saints' lives that deal with this theme, the *Vie du Pape saint Grégoire* is one of the most notorious.[36] This Life shares much in common both with the Œdipus myth and with other medieval saints' lives dealing with incest, particularly the legend of St Albanus.[37] Gregory is the product of an incestuous union between a noble brother and sister; as a result, he is abandoned at birth and raised by monks. When he reaches the age of majority, Gregory decides to abandon a possible career as a cleric and to leave the monastery to go in search of his origins, whereupon he returns to his homeland, fails to recognise his mother and – by a stroke of bad luck – ends up marrying her. Gregory's secret is eventually discovered by his mother and the couple decide that they must do penance to make up for their transgression. Gregory's mother dons a hair shirt and gives generously to the poor, while Gregory contrives to have himself manacled on a rock in the middle of the sea by a fisherman, with no food, shelter or human company for seventeen years. As a result, Gregory is forgiven his sins and is subsequently nominated by God as the most suitable replacement for the recently deceased Pope. The saint is duly collected from his rock by a group of clerics and ordained father of the church shortly afterwards. Gregory's mother then comes to Rome seeking forgiveness for her sins, unaware of the fact that the new Pope is her son/nephew/ex-husband; there ensues a brief family reunion and everybody dies happy and goes to heaven.

As is the case in other saints' lives, this text suggests that the saint must exile himself from human society in order to set aside an involvement in worldly affairs that compromises his relationship to God. This exile represents a form of social death that

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[36] I refer to Sol's edition. Unless otherwise indicated, my references are to manuscript version A1 in this edition.

[37] The connections between the legend of Albanus and that of Gregory have been discussed by Archibald and (more briefly) by Gravdal. Like Gregory, Albanus is born of an incestuous union but goes on to make a career for himself in the Church and become a saint. Albanus kills his parents when they relapse into sin – something which potentially connects the legend to that of Julian the Hospitaller. Albanus's *Vita* is found in the *Gesta Romanorum*; there is no Old French text of the legend. See Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 120—22; Gravdal, 'Confessing Incests', pp. 284—5; and *Julian*, Swan, p. 4.

subsequently affects the reading of the saint's identity in relation to the society that he has left. Unlike most other saints, however, Gregory is both the product of illegitimate desire and an unwitting participant in an incestuous union of his own. As a result, the saint's devotion to God is seen in the context of both his *de facto* exclusion from the relationships sanctioned within human society and his response to his own recognition of this exclusion. Even before Gregory leaves the monastery to seek his family, his incestuous origins are in themselves already seen as sinful: upon reading the story of his conception on the ivory tablets with which he has been abandoned, Gregory claims that he has read about

> '[...] un si trespecheur enfant
> K'un sis uncles engendrat
> E la sue ante le portat!'
> (Gr, ll. 932—34)[38]

This is not just Gregory's interpretation of his origins: the sinful implications of his birth are also repeatedly emphasised by others. What Gregory is implicitly forced to accept when confronted with the fact that he has married his own mother is that, largely on account of the sinful circumstances of his birth, his involvement in kinship is *inherently* transgressive.[39] The physical exclusion from human society that Gregory chooses as his penance is a literal expression of a situation that already exists: the symbolic confusion that is the result of Gregory's birth and marriage means that he has no legitimate place in human social networks.[40] Like Butler's Antigone, the kinship trouble that Gregory causes relegates him to a position beyond those categories that he confounds.

Gregory's exile to a place beyond human society has at least two important effects. Firstly, he enters into a relationship with God that replaces his relationship to the human world. Secondly, that relationship transforms his previously sinful and incestuous interactions in the human social world by situating them in the alternative

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[38] Quoted from manuscript B1.

[39] This argument is supported by other readings of sin in the legend. In his article on the French and German versions of the story, Huby points out the distinction to be made between *péché* and *responsabilité* in the incestuous acts with which the saint is associated. Although Gregory is not responsible for the incestuous fault either in the circumstances of his birth or in his marriage, he is still in a state of sin. As Archibald has shown, medieval moralisations of the story in the *Gesta Romanorum* see this state of sin as (among other things) an allegory of the corruption of humankind, who are born into original sin on account of the fault of Adam and Eve. Guerrau-Jalabert reads the *Vie* as a piece of Church propaganda that represents lay kinship as transgressive; Gaunt's reading explores the generic implications of this by arguing that this critique of kinship is also a criticism of certain kinds of chivalric identity. Huby, 'Le Problème de la faute', p. 454; Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp.124—5; Guerrau-Jalabert, 'Inceste et sainteté'; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 200—12.

[40] On the theme of repentance here, see Payen, *Le Motif du repentir*, pp. 104—7 (but note Sol's comments: *Gregory*, ed. by Sol, p. xxix). On asceticism and *contemptus mundi* in the life, see Johnson and Cazelles, *Le Vain Siècle*, pp. 50—51 (more generally, pp. 56—7); 68—70.

spiritual context that this relationship establishes. Gregory's sinful involvement in human kinship is thus not simply pardoned; it is transformed. His reunion with his mother introduces yet another context for reading their relationship to one another that adds to the already dizzying list of possibilities: having been forgiven their sins, Gregory and his mother/aunt/ex-wife now also respond to one another as father to daughter, Pope to Christian soul and brother to sister (insofar as they share God as a father).[41] In fact, at the same time as he reveals his identity to his mother, Gregory is careful to remind her that God is their father:

> 'Vostre fiz sui, e vos me mere.
> Bien sai que Des, li nostre pere,
> Nos volst a bone fin mener,
> Que nos a fait entretrover.'
> (Gr, ll. 2631—2634)

Just as he reveals to his mother his identity as her son, Gregory thus simultaneously asserts their relationship through God. Moreover, it is this relationship to God that has ostensibly brought mother and son back together; the couple's current relationship to one another is thus to be seen in the context of the spiritual paternity that they both share.

This clearly invokes the Marian relationship to Christ which has long been claimed as an example of what Elizabeth Archibald terms 'holy incest' (referring to the fact that Mary's relationship to God is as his daughter, spouse, mother and sister);[42] however, there is an important distinction to be made here insofar as Gregory's relationship to his mother is from the very beginning one of *real* rather than metaphorical incest. It is in this sense difficult to know how to interpret one of the last lines of the story proper, which claims that the nuns in the convent where Gregory's mother spends the rest of her life

> Tuit li [Gregory's mother] portoent grant enor
> Por la crieme e por l'amor
> De l'apostoile qui l'amot
> E qui sovent la revisot.
> (Gr, ll. 2687—90)

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[41] This episode appears in all but one of the extant manuscript versions: B1. In the version contained in Paris, BN, f. fr. 1707, the reunion of mother and son occurs, but Gregory does not make the same speech. On spiritual kinship in this episode, see Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 210—11; and Guerrau-Jalabert, 'Inceste et sainteté', p. 1305.

[42] Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*. For discussion of the incestuous relationship between God and the Virgin Mary (the paradigmatic example of 'holy incest') see pp. 238—44.

The question of whether Gregory loves his mother/aunt/ex-wife as a mother, aunt, or ex-wife, or indeed whether he loves her as a sister or as a daughter in his new role as pope and self-acknowledged son of God would in a sense be beside the point. The point is that any or all of these possibilities are legitimated by his relationship to her through God. Thus, what the poem suggests is incestuous about Gregory's relationship to his mother is not *the form* that either kinship or desire take, but rather *the human context* within which they operate.

Returning for a moment to the connection between kinship, death and desire, what my reading of the *Vie de saint Grégoire* implies is that the ethical space that saints' lives represent in terms of a kinship beyond human life is a space in which kinship and desire can be reconfigured in ways that unsettle the normative function of the social systems invoked in hagiography. This is significant because this modification of kinship and desire often plays a part in transforming the saint's identity as a figure to be read both within the text and outside it, a process that can also be seen in other saints' lives.

Incestuous paternal desire is an implicit theme in the lives of a number of female saints and, in a similar way to the incestuous kinship seen in the Life of Gregory, is a way of signalling the inherently corrupt nature of human relationships.[43] Thus, in Gautier de Coinci's *Vie de sainte Cristine* (mentioned earlier), the saint's love of her father/bridegroom Christ parallels her human father's excessive and overweening desire for his daughter. As is commonly the case with female saints, Christine is absolutely and exclusively devoted to God from her infancy and, in accordance with God's wishes, vows to take no other husband than him. Unfortunately, she happens to be the only daughter of a pagan nobleman whose greatest fear is that Christine should convert to Christianity and abandon her devotion both to him and to his gods. This paranoia leads him to have a luxurious, sumptuously decorated tower built for his daughter, so that he can isolate Christine from the outside world and ensure that she prays to the gods he worships.[44]

The way in which these paternal relationships are set up in the text invites the reader to contrast the saint's relationship to God with her relationship to her biological

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[43] See Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, pp. 149, 177, 234; and Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, p. 63.

[44] The saint's confinement to a tower built by her father echoes the Life of St Barbara. However, the incestuous or improper overtones of this action as the imposition of excessive paternal desire on the virgin saint are developed far more explicitly in this version of the Life of Christine than they are in the *Vie de sainte Barbe*. Cazelles's statement that 'in Passions devoted to persecuted daughters (Christina and Barbara), enclosure is an ordeal imposed by incest-minded fathers who become tyrants out of sexual frustration' overlooks these differences. Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, p. 63.

father and to similarly compare the forms of desire that each of these relationships engender. This comparison is implicit in description of the saint's relationship to her human and divine fathers as well as forming a part of Christine's articulation of these relationships. For example, in the early stages of the poem we are told that

> [...] qui glose son non, ele fu sa [God's] fillole.
> Bien dut croistre par li sainte crestienté,
> Car du non Jhesucrist fu le sien non enté.
> Molt reprist bien et crut et frutefia l'ente,
> C'onques de Dieu servir a nul jor ne fu lente.
> Envers lui eut le cuer si amiable et tenre
> C'onques ne roi ne conte a baron ne volt penre;
> Et Il tant l'aama qu'Il ne la volt laissier
> A nul home vivant ne vaincre ne plaissier.
> (Cri, ll. 124—32)

Christine is thus etymologically and spiritually descended from God: she is part of a Christian genealogy that can be traced through the derivation of her name, making her both the descendant and the goddaughter (*fillole*) of Christ. In addition to this genealogical affiliation, Christine also loves God as her father and bridegroom and is, in turn, loved by God as her doting and possessive father/fiancé.

This rather complicated mixture of affective and genealogical bonds finds a disturbing parody in the saint's relationship to her human father. Urban's excessive love of his daughter is almost always linked to his desire to preserve her obedience to him and to his religion. This love is not only possessive to the point of paranoia, it is also continually shadowed by the threat of violence and death. For example, in musing to himself about his daughter, Urban remarks that, in spite of the fact that he loves her 'tant com plus puet pere enfant amer' he would nonetheless rather see her drowned than converted to Christianity – a punishment that he later visits upon his daughter for real, when her religious affiliation is discovered (Cri, ll. 161—70).

It is in the interests of maintaining this obedience, and of protecting himself from the consequences of his daughter's disloyalty, that Urban constructs the tower in which he intends to shelter Christine from the outside world. His request that his daughter occupy the tower in compliance with his wishes is prefaced by a typical display of excessive paternal affection:

> Ses bras li lace au col, si la baise en la face.
> 'Fille', fait il, 'tant t'aime que ne sai que j'en face.
> D'or en avant te vueil descovrir mon voloir.
> Chose nule que vuueille ne doiz tu desvoloir.
> Ceste tor t'ai fait faire, s'i deignes abiter.
> Por ton cors aaisier et por toi deliter,

> Bele fille, avec toi metrai .xij puceles:
> Toutes te serviront et seront tes anceles.
> Jor et nuit aorras les dieux que t'ai fait faire.'
> (Cri, ll. 199—207)

Urban's relationship to Christine thus mirrors her relationship to God in a number of ways. Firstly, Urban seeks to reinforce his social and affective bonds with his daughter by asking her to submit both to his will and to his religion, a request that clearly competes with the claims made upon the saint by God. Paternity and religious observance combine in a terrestrial context to emphasise the violent, destructive potential of excessive human love. Secondly, Urban's love for Christine is excessive to the point of being incestuous. The physicality of Urban's love of his daughter has a suffocating and rather disturbing quality to it; indeed, the fervour of his embraces eventually results in Christine's request that he refrain from kissing her on the mouth because she wishes to make a pure sacrifice to God (Cri, ll. 713—16).[45] Later, this obsession with his daughter as a physical object that he loves, owns and jealously protects translates into the horrific tortures to which he subjects her in attempting to persuade her to recant. By contrast, God's love of Christine – which is similarly demanding and all-consuming – is seen as a positive alternative to the relationship she has with her human father and eventually proves to be more useful in the battle for custody over the saint that takes place between the two patriarchs.

If the Life of Christine suggests that kinship can be a mode of relating to God (an idea already familiar in the notion of God the father), it also makes this mode of relationship a lens through which the saint can be viewed. For it is only once Christine is taken at her word and seen as the daughter and spouse of God that she can be considered a saint at all; the alternative reading is that represented by Urban, who sees his daughter exclusively in terms of physical kinship and worldly love. In this context, death as a form of extra-social existence takes on an extraordinarily literal role both in revealing how the saint is situated with regard to human kinship and society and also in constructing a context within which the saint is to be read by others. Like Gregory, Christine is situated both inside and outside social networks as a result of her relationship to God. However, in the case of the female martyr, this liminal position is explicitly related to a somewhat more literal form of death-in-life. Christine, like other Christian martyrs, exists in a limit zone between life and death in which she is

[45] The suggestion of incestuous desire here (if not incest *per se*) would seem to contradict Gravdal's claim that paternal incest is seen as less serious than its maternal counterpart in Old French literature, the chief function of the father, in Gravdal's view, being to achieve forgiveness. Christine's choice of a divine father/bridegroom also provides an alternative to the independently negotiated, exogamous marriages made by romance heroines

repeatedly tortured and put to death by her human father only to be miraculously sustained and restored to life by God. On the one hand, the function of the saint's suffering is to reveal how she has deliberately set herself outside human social systems (this being reinforced by the fact that the society she repudiates then attempts – and fails – to reject her physically, by having her put to death). On the other hand, the saint's tortures act as a vehicle for the exposure and reinforcement of her kinship with God, thereby creating an alternative frame for her identity as it is defined by her relations to others. Within this setting, the reader is encouraged to abandon a viewpoint aligned with that of Urban and to read the saint in terms of her relationship to God, a relationship that conflates several forms of kinship and desire, as it requires us to see Christine simultaneously as God's daughter, lover, bride and servant.

These relationships are in fact claimed repeatedly by Christine during her tortures. For instance, when speaking to her distraught mother from her prison cell, Christine claims to be descended from Christ through her name and insists that 'Dieu en puisse aorer, le puissant Roi celestre, | quant par sa grant douceur mon parrin deigna estre' (Cri, ll. 1333—4). The paternal dimension of this kinship with God is later emphasised in Christine's conversations with her father, where she makes claims to being the 'fille au hault Roi, le Pere esperitable' (Cri, ll. 1479). Equally, at several points during her sufferings, the saint addresses God as her father, lover and/or bridegroom and articulates her desire for him through various combinations of these relationships.[46] The effect of this process, in which the saint's love of God is articulated through the layering of the emotional responses associated with various kin relations, is expressed in one of Christine's final speeches:

> 'Glorieux Dieu', fait ele, 'en cui mon cuer est touz,
> Douz pere, douz ami, sur toutez douceurs douz,
> Piteuz Roi, piteuz Sire, sur tous autres piteuz,
> [...]
> Por reposer t'amie apareille le lit.
> Douz amis, fai t'amie en la joie esjoïr
> Que ne puet langue dire n'oreille humaine oïr.'
> (Cri, ll. 3515—17; 3520—22)

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who face the threat of incest. See 'Confessing Incests', esp. pp. 289—91.

[46] An impression of the frequency of the terms Christine uses to refer to God (apart from *Dieu*, that is) can be gained from the list of terms and line references below.
pere:1102, 1315, 1417, 1684, 1867, 1918, 1929, 1951, 2654 (3), 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2661, 2743, 2745, 2752, 3156, 3205, 3250, 3252, 3516, 3725 **ami:** 3516, 3521 **parrin:** 1334 **saint enfant:** 3456 **roi:** 1088, 1089, 1321, 1333, 1479, 1525, 1533, 1806, 1865, 1922, 1951, 1955, 2003, 2396, 2458, 2873 (2), 3077, 3176, 3296, 3318, 3434, 3442, 3454, 3492, 3517, 3726 **sire:**1089, 1315, 1537, 1625, 1635, 1637, 1683, 1773, 1809, 1865, 1923, 1931, 1952, 2003, 2499, 2745, 2748, 3001, 3013, 3022, 3435, 3495, 3517 **seigneur:** 3051, 3457, 3484, 3612 **gouvernere:**1955, 3435 **docteur:** 3456 **maistre:** 3456.

Christine's love of God is thus a multifaceted and all-consuming emotional engagement with a heavenly father, lover, king, lord and husband-to-be. Yet her speech suggests that this is part of what it means to experience love both at and just beyond its human limits. The tenderness of Christine's heavenly father/lover surpasses all tenderness; the pity of her king and lord surpasses all pity; the joy with which her devotion will be rewarded in heaven cannot be experienced or related through human media. Christine's conflation of different kin relations in her invocation of God in this passage is thus part of an attempt to express that which is outside human intelligibility. Her reference to God as father, lover, king and lord appears in the context of a life beyond the human world and, more importantly, in relation to a life beyond the physical death that Christine herself has yet to experience.

As the stories of Gregory and Christine suggest, for the saint, kinship between life and death involves a liminal relationship to human kinship and desire, a relationship that translates into an affirmation of troubled filiation both at and beyond that limit. Kinship with God is not, however, simply a matter of one's physical location within (or outside) a system: it also crucially concerns desires expressed through the saint that correspondingly exceed the limits that such human systems place upon sexual expression. Incest functions within this setting as a figure of that which is excluded by human laws, as a transgressive remnant which is recuperated by a metaphysical system that transforms it into a model of sublime kinship. Saints' lives thus use incest to expose what, ideologically speaking, is at stake in the subject's participation in social systems, and manipulate this exposure in order to renegotiate the subject's relationship to the law from the point of its transgression. This renegotiation depends on the creation of a dichotomy central to the ethos of hagiographic literature more generally, based, in the first instance, upon an awareness of human kinship as an idiom of social interaction which is both finite and inherently, excessively, even incestuously flawed and, in the second instance, upon a view of divine kinship as the site of spiritual relations and desires that ostensibly overcome the limitations imposed by terrestrial kinship as it is thus conceived. The manoeuvre that enables this juxtaposition requires a reading of normative kin relations from the point at which they reach their limit, thereby challenging the normative authority of the structure while simultaneously reasserting that authority in a different form.

I will now consider more closely what this shift means in terms of the forms of gender and sexuality that kinship supposedly establishes. The focus of this final section will be virgin nuptiality, as the virgin's marriage to Christ is one of the places where the

interface between kinship and sexual desire is most clearly expressed (and critiqued) in hagiography. The significance of virgin nuptiality for my discussion of kinship in saints' lives concerns its function as a complex metaphor used to express a relationship to God that, as I will argue, is more than simply 'marital' in the restricted, human sense of the term. Indeed, in this respect, marriage in the Lives of the virgin saints might be seen to function in a similar way to incest insofar as it is used to contrast a variety of 'good' and 'bad' forms of kinship and desire. However, marriage, unlike incest, is not seen as inherently illegitimate in human contexts; on the contrary, it is one of the primary means whereby 'normal' forms of gender and sexuality are inscribed through social systems. The virgin's marriage to Christ thus provides a means of further developing the picture of kinship between life and death that has so far emerged, by allowing a consideration of the disruptive impact of the saint's liminality on normal identities and desires.

2.3.3. Nuptial Virginity and Desire

The relatively large amount of critical attention that has been paid to the representation of marriage and virginity in saints' lives has led to some general conclusions that should be mentioned here. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, saints' lives often concern themselves with marriage as both a social institution and a form of mystical union. Saints' lives from this period are thought to reflect both an evolution in the Church's attitude towards marriage and a shift in its approach to the religious instruction of the laity.[47]

The twelfth century seems to have seen the widespread adoption of a model of marriage based on consent, a model that was developed and enforced by the Church, at least in cases of litigation.[48] Literary historians such as Neil Cartlidge have suggested that this historical shift colours the depiction of marriage in religious and non-religious literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[49] More specifically in relation to hagiography, this shift has been linked to efforts on the part of the Church to provide models of saintly behaviour that could appeal to the laity in a manner that would both broaden and complement existing models of sanctity represented by earlier

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[47] See Glasser, 'Marriage in Medieval Hagiography'; Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 219—49; on lay sanctity and its impact on hagiographic representation more broadly, see Vauchez, 'Lay People's Sanctity in Western Europe'.

[48] This is not to say consent was the only factor used to determine the legitimacy of a union; it was, however, a necessary condition (see above, n. 4).

[49] Cartlidge suggests (rather optimistically) that this historical shift results in an attitude towards marriage characterised by a new and refreshing idealism that enables its development as a metaphor with enhanced emotional potential. See *Medieval Marriage: Literary Approaches*.

hagiographic types such as martyrs, confessors, hermits and so on. One of the changes that occurred in representations of marriage in saints' lives was therefore in the view of marriage as an impediment to spiritual accomplishment. The model of the married saint evolves in the later Middle Ages, beginning in the thirteenth century with women such as Elizabeth of Hungary, who became a saint even though she was married with children.[50]

This less prejudiced attitude towards marriage nonetheless continued to coexist with the more prevalent, less favourable depictions of it found in other branches of hagiographic literature based upon earlier models, such as the *passiones*.[51] For the most part, marriage is represented as something to be renounced in Old French hagiography. Yet, as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has indicated, this rejection of 'real' marriage is seen alongside its *metaphorical* saturation of depictions of female virginity:

> In the high middle ages, although the idea of the virgin as a *vir-ago*, a woman acting like a man, survives, virginity is (re-)sexualised and feminised [...] virginity is rewritten as marriage, just as marriage can be rewritten (and according to some high medieval exemplary biographies, practised) as chastity.[52]

This representational shift clearly responds to an evolution in contemporary medieval discourse; however, as I will argue, it also has certain troubling effects on the figuration of the virgin's gender and sexuality and on the depiction of marriage in hagiography itself. The tension implicit in the metaphorical appropriation of marriage as a means of 'rewriting' virginity makes it particularly fertile ground for the cultivation of slippages between different relationships and the sexual and social norms that those relationships underwrite. Virginity-as-marriage in saints' lives involves a troubling juxtaposition of normal and abnormal, social and extra social forms of kinship and sexuality that makes it 'queer' in a more obvious way than would simply *being* married.[53] It is for this reason that, for the purposes of the present discussion, I choose to focus on virgin nuptiality as opposed to married saints.

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[50] Elizabeth died in 1231, was canonised four years later and inspired at least two 13th -century vernacular Lives, one of which was composed by Rutebeuf. The notion of the married saint was not unique to later medieval culture, of course: saints such as Osith and Eustace provide examples of married saints from earlier periods (whose Lives were recopied in the 13th century, in Eustace's case quite extensively). The point is that the saint's relationship to marriage — at least as it appears in contemporary saints' lives — is seen rather differently (if not always altogether positively) from the 13th century onwards.

[51] On the equivocal attitudes towards marriage expressed in other genres in the 12th and 13th centuries, see Payen, 'La "Mise en roman" du mariage'.

[52] Wogan-Browne, 'The Virgin's Tale', p. 166.

[53] The notion of the virgin as a queer sexual category has been advanced elsewhere by Frye, *Willful Virgin*; for historical studies of queer virginity see Jankowski, *Pure Resistance*; and Salih, *Versions of Virginity* and 'Queering *Sponsalia Christi*'.

As mentioned in Chapter One, the disruptions caused by virgin nuptiality are, in my view, aimed primarily at the authority of *human systems* rather than being exclusively concerned with patriarchal or paternal authority. Even though these forms of authority are often associated with human society, they are by no means synonymous with it. The significance of considering the power that the virgin confronts as *social* rather than masculine or patriarchal is that the virgin's marriage to God therefore poses a potential threat to the power of heterosexual (as well as male) hegemony. By resisting a model of kinship defined in accordance with human social and sexual norms, the virgin who marries Christ associates herself with a sublime form of desire that potentially escapes heterosexual as well as masculine control.

I will suggest in this section that because virginity is, as Wogan-Browne puts it, 'rewritten' as marriage, virginity is construed in terms of a desire for a place within an alternative relational network metaphorically condensed into the figure of Christ. (It is worth indicating in passing that this complex form of desire – as a desire for a role within a system as well as a longing for an individual – would, in my view, be altogether different, had virginity been rewritten simply as a form of *sex*.) Although the metaphorical uses to which marriage is put in female saints' lives significantly modify the way the virgin is represented, I will argue that the point of this representational shift is, in many of these texts, the evacuation of the normal sexual meaning of marriage, not the sexualisation of virginity.[54] Nuptial virginity is not necessarily synonymous with the (re-)feminisation and sexualisation of virgin saints; in depicting the nuptial virgin, saints' lives offer a conception of marriage that instead of being allied with normal or intelligible sexual categories is often, by contrast, associated with forms of gender and sexuality that confuse such classifications.

Some of the implications of the perception of the virgin as a figure situated in relation to kinship and desire between life and death can be developed in connection with the *Vie de sainte Euphrosine*. Despite the fact that her spiritual career is somewhat different from that of Christine, Euphrosine resembles her in that she too rejects earthly kinship and marriage for love of God. As seen in Chapter One, after resolving to consecrate her virginity to God, Euphrosine secretly marries Christ in a ceremony where she becomes a nun and changes her name. She then runs away from home and, in order to avoid discovery by her father and fiancé, dresses as a knight, goes to the nearest

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[54] As indicated in the quotation from Wogan-Browne's work given earlier, she does stress the fact that the metaphorical association of virginity and marriage also works in the reverse sense. However, the suggestion that marriage can also be rewritten as chastity refers not to the virgin saint but to her married counterpart. See above, n. 52.

Benedictine monastery, and is ordained a monk. When her father appeals to the monks for help, the abbot sends him to Euphrosine for comfort and advice, and father and daughter thus begin a spiritual friendship that lasts until Euphrosine dies thirty years later. On her deathbed, Euphrosine reveals to her father that she is in fact his long lost daughter. When the saint has died and gone to heaven, her father mourns her for a brief period before deciding to live in his daughter's cell in the monastery for two years, and to remain a monk for the rest of his life.

Euphrosine's marriage to God in the ceremony where she becomes a nun inaugurates the events of the narrative, and her identity as a bride of Christ is clearly an important part of how the saint is viewed in relation to kinship. As in the case of Christine, Euphrosine's spiritual marriage situates her outside human kinship by affirming her relationship to God as a superior substitute for similar kinds of human alliance.[55] The change of name that accompanies Euphrosine's spiritual marriage is significant in this respect. As God's bride, Euphrosine becomes Esmerade – or Emerald – which, we are informed, is a name that can be used for either a man or a woman. What the saint's removal from human kinship does, is thus to efface Euphrosine's name along with her social identity and to establish an alternative affiliation to Christ that at least partly obscures her gender. Even before Euphrosine dresses as a boy and becomes a monk, the name she acquires through marriage to God suggests that she is somehow situated between masculine and feminine identities. By removing her from human kinship, Euphrosine's marriage to God simultaneously extracts her from the gender system that this model of kinship inscribes. Euphrosine's example thus takes the kinds of disruption seen in the other texts I've mentioned a stage further, suggesting that the saint's liminality implies a removal *both* from human kinship *and* from the gender roles that kinship helps to establish.

By the end of the poem, the ambiguous status of Euphrosine's identity as Esmerade has been reinforced by the various masculine roles that she adopts after her marriage to God.[56] This ambiguity often means that response to the saint as it is represented in the text implicitly confuses the kinship roles and gendered subject positions that those roles secure. One of the most obvious examples of this disruption is the transformation that occurs in the responses of Euphrosine's father to the saint. Euphrosine's father eventually comes to see the saint not only as his daughter, but also,

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[55] Cf. Ch. 1.6.1. above.

[56] Elliott notes that disguise in saints' lives is a form of 'surrogate or displaced death' see *RTP*, p. 120. On the basis of Euphrosine's example, one might add that disguise acts as a manifestation of an exclusion from society equivalent to symbolic death, a death that has often already taken place for the saint.

insofar as he relates to her as Esmerade the monk, as his *frere* and *ami* (Euph, ll. 1046—50) – terms that he uses to address her as she is dying. His transformed relationship to Euphrosine consequently involves a transformation of normal kinship that not only alters his relationship to her as her father but which also reallocates gender roles within that setting. Furthermore, this develops into an emulation of Euphrosine that associates father and daughter in another way, as servants of God and as intercessors on behalf of the Christian community, both being mentioned in this capacity at the end of the poem. The troubling effect of the saint's passage into an alternative system of spiritual relations is thus not only integral to spiritual kinship, it also forms an essential part of the negotiation and renegotiation of response to the saint. As Euphrosine's transformed relationship with her father suggests, seeing Euphrosine as a saint and spiritual model involves relating to her outside the normal boundaries of human kinship and the gender systems it underwrites. This has implications for the negotiation of response in the Christian community outside the text insofar as this community is invited to contemplate the saint in similar terms. Although the reader/audience is invited to pray to Euphrosine as 'Deu espose e amie' at the end of the poem, seeing the saint as God's spouse already involves considering her in a context radically outside social norms, a context in which kinship and gender as they are thought of in human terms are both refuted and redefined.

Useful comparison can be made in this respect between Euphrosine and the Anglo-Norman *Vie de sainte Foy*, where the saint similarly appears to be situated in complex relationship to the human structures that would render her identity intelligible in 'normal' terms. Foy – referred to throughout the poem as 'la Deu amie' – is, quite literally, an embodiment of faith. The saint's name is given to her along with her belief in God as a form of divine gift that becomes inseparable from her physical and spiritual being:

> La bele Fey esteit nomée,
> E tele fu sa destinée.
> Cel nun li dona Jhesu Crist
> Kant il la fei en son quer mist,
> Ke par example de la fei
> Trest plusurs curages a sei;
> Kar seinte Fey fu la primere
> Ke de martire porte banere
> En la bele cité d'Agenne
> (Foy, ll. 127—35)

Faith thus provides the kernel of the saint's identity; it is not only her name, but also, conversely, a principle that she embodies and exemplifies as part of her relationship to

Christ. The act of self-donation often construed as a form of marriage in the lives of female saints appears, in the *Vie de sainte Foy*, to be an extension of this same relationship of faith. Faith (*fei*) simultaneously underwrites the saint's connection to Christ through baptism and the gesture in which she gives herself to him as an *amie*. Thus, as she explains to her persecutor Decius,

> 'Crestiene sui des enfaunce;
> Puis ke jeo fui de funz levée,
> E en le nun Deu baptizée,
> A Jhesu del tut me rendi
> Ke pur nus tuz la mort suffri,
> A Jhesu Crist, le fiz Marie
> Ke cele terre ad an baillie
> A li me doinz, a li me rend
> A li auke devotement.'
> (Foy, ll. 292—300)

In this speech, Foy provides an exposition of her relationship to God. In the first three lines, she explains her Christian origins, origins which, as noted above, make the saint both a recipient and embodiment of the faith she receives from Christ. Foy's gesture of self-donation is both a recognition of the relationship that her baptism establishes and a confirmation of that alliance, a confirmation which invokes both marriage and service to a powerful lord 'ke cele terre ad an baillie'. Foy's kinship with Christ is, moreover, part of a complex relationship of the gift in which the saint renders to God that which is, by implication, already his. The saint embodies the faith that she receives from Christ by virtue of the fact that she returns herself to him in acknowledgement of this gift, thereby affirming faith as a relationship that is maintained dynamically, through its repeated performance.

This, in turn, has an effect on the presentation of Foy's identity that influences the way her gender and sexual body are read. Thus, although Simon of Walsingham's introduction to the poem focuses on the saint, Foy herself is exasperatingly difficult to visualise:[57]

> Kar cum vus plus de fei orrez
> En fei plus fermé en serrez.
> Pur ceo entendez ore a mey
> Si vus diray de seinte Fey,
> D'une seintissime pucele,
> Bele de vis, de fei plus bele,
> La seinte vie e la passiun,
> E la seinte conversatiun:
> Cum son seint nun e seinte vie
> Ne se descordereient mie;

[57] On the visualisation of the saint see Campbell, 'Sacrificial Spectacle'.

Mes se acorderunt plus bel
Ke ne fet la gemme en anel
Kar de trestut esteient un,
Sa seinte vie e son seint nun
(Foy, ll. 15—28)

The impression left by this passage is of a series of revolving, kaleidoscopic mirrors in which the figure of the saint appears amidst a number of other reflections that merge with and emerge from her name. The association of kinship with faith which can be seen in the other quotations from this text is here brought directly to bear on the conceptualisation of the saint's physical being. The result is, firstly, the elision of the physical content of Foy's gender: Foy's femininity as a *seintissime pucele* slides out of, then into the feminine gender of *fei* the abstract noun. This movement is echoed and reinforced by the elision of physical beauty by the metaphysical beauty of faith, as the saint's face is glimpsed only to dissolve into the less concrete image of faith as belief in God.

The second important feature of this introduction is its insistence upon faith as a relationship between name and Life, 'seint nun e seinte vie'. Faith here connotes the marriage not of the saint and Christ but of masculine and feminine nouns united in the image of the perfect fit between the ring and the precious stone that it encloses. This image recalls the metaphor referred to in the *Vie de sainte Euphrosine*, where the saint's marriage to God is described in almost identical terms. In the *Vie de sainte Foy* its occurrence suggests a similar, although not an identical, phenomenon: Foy's physicality is similarly reconceptualised in terms of a metaphysical relationship that invokes her proximity to God but, unlike Euphrosine, Foy is not the gem in the ring but the embodiment of the metaphorical union of *gemme* and *anel*. This union posits a symbiosis that emerges from and cuts across kinship: Foy is *part of* a relationship of faith but she also *is* that relationship itself and the saint therefore provides the means of reproducing that relationship in the Christian community who read or listen to the text. Foy, in being nominally identical with faith in God becomes the site upon which the name that connotes her faith and the narrative that describes its performance are brought seamlessly together in a single body. It is this body – or, rather, this shifting kaleidoscope of meaning symbolised by *Fey/fei* – that the poem's audience is directed towards, being encouraged to submit to enclosure by *fei* in a union that reproduces the enclosure of name and life, gem and ring and, implicitly, Foy and Christ.

The *passiones* of virgins such as Margaret develop the troubling possibilities of nuptial metaphors and the renegotiation of social and sexual status that they engender in

other ways. In the Life of St Margaret formerly contained in the Edwardes manuscript,[58] the saint's marriage to God is once again seen in systemic terms, appearing in the context of her prior kinship to God. The saint is an only child alienated from her family at an early age. Having placed the baby Margaret with a wetnurse in the town, the saint's mother dies, leaving the child unable to return to her pagan father and without the advice or protection of brothers or sisters (Ma, ll. 29—31). Despite this isolation from worldly kin, or perhaps because of it, God steps in as Margaret's guardian and, acting in the stead of her human family, 'li fut aidant e maintenere' (Ma, l. 32). In return, although her human father is a pagan priest, Margaret becomes a firm believer in the heavenly king who has come to her aid.

Margaret's filial relationship to God is later developed in connection with her other roles in the poem. The saint's first mention of God is as her prince, emperor and *seignur*, a relationship that is construed primarily in terms of worship, service and allegiance. This relationship clearly informs Margaret's conduct at later stages in her Life, when God, usually referred to as Margaret's *sire* or *seigneur*, helps the *ancele Deu* to overcome their adversaries.[59] For instance, Margaret's violent – and invariably victorious – skirmishes with diabolical dragons and their vengeful relatives while in prison lead her to exclaim: 'veirement sui ancele Jhesu Crist! | Cil est mi sire, qui tut cest mund fist: | sue merci, quant vertu en mei mist!' (Ma, l. 206—8). Significantly, the saint's demonstrations of divinely-inspired valour are directed against a *family* of devils who claim to be related to one another and Margaret's role as *miles Christi* therefore suggests a conflict between warring families in which she is the defender of her celestial kin.[60] The saint's bond of service thus suggests a development of Margaret's familial connection to God, in which – like heroes of epic poetry – she is at once vassal to a king and a member (and defender) of his family.[61]

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[58] See Dean and Boulton, p. 316 (entry 572). I refer to Reichl's edition (see Clandfield's corrections in 'Notes').

[59] This is also the case to a large extent in Wace's version of the *Vie*, although this poem is less obviously 'epic' in tone. See, for example: *A* and *T*, ll. 177—186; *T*, ll. 283—362; *A*, ll. 297—362, in Wace, *Margaret*, ed. by Keller. On conflict between pagan and Christian in Wace's version, see Johnson and Cazelles, *Le Vain Siècle*, pp. 133—6.

[60] The exclamation of the 2nd devil that Margaret fights could have been taken directly from a *chanson de geste*: '[...] Tu m'as,' dist il, 'Ruffin, mun frere, mort. | Par Belzebub, tu l'occeis a tort! | Encontre mei ta atie est fort, | mes bien te vait ke ore ne t'enport.' (Ma, ll. 189—92). Cf. *A*, *T* and *M*, ll. 418—22 in Wace, *Margaret*, ed. by Keller.

[61] It is worth noting that Margaret's last words (which do not find a correlative in Wace) invoke her relationship of fealty to God: 'Deu, qui ne falz a nul toen sergant, | par ki aie vencu ai cest tirant, | tei cri merci, tei reclaim a guarant | e la meie alme en tes mains comant.' (Ma, ll. 317—20). On saints' lives and epic poetry, see Ch. 3.3.1. below.

The saint's marriage complements this complex filiation by rearticulating the faith that it connotes as another form of kinship.[62] When pressed by her pagan interrogators to accept marriage to a high-ranking official in return for her observance of pagan religion, Margaret asserts that she is already married to God, a relationship that precludes any other marital commitment or religious devotion:

> '[...]
> Ja de altre espus ne enterai en conrei.
> A li me sui del tut prise par fei
> E il me ad mis sun anel en mun dei.
> Lui sul aur, lui aim, e en lui crei!'
> (Ma, ll. 101—04)

The broader context for Margaret's marriage to Christ is significant in that the *fei* that she has pledged in marriage has a history that makes it more than simply a nuptial vow. Her love of Christ is commensurate with her faith, a faith that invokes Margaret's relationship to God as his daughter and *protégée*, as his vassal and subject, and, finally, as his wife. The point of the saint's marriage is further to reinforce the sense that God is, as far as Margaret is concerned, a superior replacement for *all* her worldly relationships, be they parental, imperial, marital or otherwise.[63] Furthermore, the marital bond that Margaret claims to have with Christ gives form to a complex relationship of devotion between the saint and God, relocating her relationships of social dependency in a ritual articulation of faith both in and to Christ.

The confluence of faith and nuptiality that occurs through the virgin saint challenges human systems in other ways, even in those texts which seem most conservatively feminising or sexualising. My final example – *La Vie de sainte Juliane* – is a case in point.[64] Juliana consecrates her virginity at an early age, claiming God as her lord and husband; the saint's intentions are later threatened by an offer of marriage that her father clearly thinks is too good to refuse, and the familiar battle of the sexes that characterises so many female saints' lives then ensues. Precisely because this poem offers few surprises in its depiction of the female virgin's struggle to maintain her vow of chastity, several aspects of Juliana's refusal of marriage should be underlined.

Firstly, as noted above, the virgin's decision to retire prematurely from human sex-gender systems is a decision that implies rejection of the authority on which those

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[62] The topos of love and marriage is an addition to the Latin *Vita*, which only mentions Margaret's role as a *miles Christi*. For discussion of this in relation to Wace's life of St Margaret see Postlewate, 'Vernacular Hagiography and Lay Piety', pp. 115—22.
[63] On the precedence that divine genealogy takes in Wace's version, see Calin: 'Saints' Stories', p. 35 and *The French Tradition*, pp. 99—100.
[64] I refer to von Feilitzen's edition.

systems are maintained. In the opening section of the saint's Life, Juliana's vow is seen in contrast to the exigencies of the powerful anti-Christian establishment. For instance, her father, African, has few distinguishing features other than being a dedicated Christian-hating pagan, whose predilection for tormenting the Christian community is implicitly connected to the Roman emperors Maximian and Ethiochen (Ju, ll. 71—84).[65] Within this setting, the saint's suitor plays a crucial part in personalising and sexualising the threat that this pagan authority poses to Juliana and, like many of the young men who seek to marry virgins in hagiography, occupies a number of related roles as the poem progresses, all of which express that authority in various, interconnected ways. Eliseus (the suitor in question) is a rich, powerful and eminent prince whose suit is approved by Juliana's father and kin (*pairent*) (Ju, ll. 122—27). When Juliana's refusal of him on religious grounds is made clear, Eliseus transforms into a model pagan torturer, performing the persecuting function with which African and the pagan empire more generally are already associated. Eliseus thus embodies the threat posed to the saint by human marriage and the social system that it underpins, yet he also demonstrates how this threat is part of a broader conflict in which the saint must pit herself against the worldly authority of pagan society *tout court*. Juliana's dedication of her virginity to God can therefore be seen as a refusal of human marriage that challenges pagan society as a whole, by undermining the social and religious authority that binds it together.

Some of the implications of the saint's marriage to God as an expression of a religious desire that opposes social systems can be glimpsed at several moments in the poem. For instance, before revealing her prior commitment to God, Juliana tells her suitor that she will not agree to be his wife unless he first becomes 'chanceliers, | desoz lo roi maistre avoweiz' (Ju, ll. 141—42). What Juliana intends by this is that her suitor should serve the God she worships. Misunderstanding her statement, however, the amorous prince who is seeking her hand assumes that she is referring to the king of Rome and, after much effort, obtains the office that he believes will secure him a wife. Despite the fact that Juliana's request (as she understands it) is not granted, her assertion nonetheless raises an important question regarding the marriage she has contracted to God: what if Eliseus had done as she asked? Where would that have left her relationship to Christ? This is not a purely academic question in Juliana's case, as her assertion –

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[65] The emperors are mentioned in the context of African's vehement dislike of the Christians; even though they are not explicitly named as persecutors, the intention nonetheless seems to be to emphasise the broader context for what might otherwise be construed as a father/daughter struggle (and thus to underline Juliana's relative powerlessness as a self-avowed Christian).

and its implications – are repeated later on. Having been exposed and tortured as a Christian, Juliana responds to the repetition of Eliseus's offer of love by claiming that, although she would never abandon her promise to Christ, Eliseus could enter a relationship of service to God along with her if he agrees to convert and be baptised (Ju, ll. 310—20). Juliana goes on to affirm that

> 'Cant tu ne vuls pas par m'amur
> Deu adorer, nostre sanior,
> Ki tot a fait et tot creeit,
> Ja n'avras part en m'amisteit.'
> (Ju, ll. 348—51)

Juliana thus suggests that the *amisteit* that Eliseus wants from her is available on certain conditions. A relationship would be possible between Juliana and her human lover, but only once human love has been translated into a context in which restricted, sexual desire is transformed into a more complex, spiritual bond mediated by mutual devotion and service to God. As if to reinforce this inference, what Juliana's speech leaves suggestively unclear is what worshipping God 'par m'amur' might mean. The implication is that Eliseus should devote himself to God *for* love of Juliana, but also that he should do so *through* her own love of God: in other words, Eliseus should take the saint's love of her celestial husband – a love which connotes faith as well as nuptial commitment – as a model for the development of his own Christian belief.

The fact that the virgin's marriage to God is based on a form of love that is commensurate with her faith thus has important implications for how the nuptiality of the virgin is to be understood. Juliana's love of God, although expressed as a form of marriage, is neither straightforwardly monogamous nor confined to a relationship between male and female partners: the saint suggests that her male suitor can become part of a celestial threesome in which desire is directed towards both the saint and God, and in which love, by being transferable through imitation, is at once individual and communal. Considered thus, marriage connotes a relationship based upon desire, but this desire is not understood in physical terms. Rather, as an expression of faith, desire is implicitly detached from the saint's gendered role within human kinship systems, a detachment that is revealed through the association of desire with a transformed version of that role.

What is potentially troubling about the 'marriages' to God that all of these female virgins contract is that, unlike the human marriages that these saints refuse, virgin nuptiality is not securely grounded in sexual difference or sexual desire. Instead, the virgin's marriage provides a means of resisting the human structures that impose

such categories, along with the authority through which these structures are sustained. Partly because of this detachment from human society, the saint's marriage acts as a metonym for a kinship with God based on faith, a kinship which itself conflates a number of different forms of alliance. For the saint, marriage signifies a belief that weaves together a number of different subject positions, suggesting that the virgin's role as bride is comparable to her roles as daughter, servant and *miles Christi* (to name but three).[66]

Virgin nuptiality can thus be compared to the forms of kinship discussed in section 2.3.2. As in the cases of Gregory and Christine, the virgin's exile from human systems implies inhabiting a space indifferent to the categories that render gender and sexuality intelligible in mundane terms. The virgin's social 'death' also similarly implies maintaining an inherently overdetermined intimacy with God, an intimacy which, although expressed in terms of kinship, refers to relations and desires that are always in excess of human norms. What this suggests is that the layering of roles and desires in the articulation of the virgin saint's relationship to God has queer potential: it indicates a sphere in which desire confounds classification in terms of sexual and social norms precisely because it exceeds human limits and proscriptions.[67]

2.3.4. Queer Desire in the *Vie de sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie*

In order to explore more fully how queer forms of marriage and desire inform hagiographic depictions of female virgins, I would now finally like to consider Clemence of Barking's Life of St Catherine. This version of the *Vie de sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie* is a highly sophisticated text which seems to have enjoyed a relatively wide circulation in both insular and continental traditions.[68] Modern interpretations of the *Vie* have often emphasised the complex engagement between this text and other literary registers, most notably those of courtly vernacular traditions such as romance.[69] As Catherine Batt has argued, Clemence's rewriting of *courtoisie* both redirects the courtly idiom it appropriates and exploits its potential for plural reference, relocating that which is considered 'truly' courtly – as this is understood in the context of the

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[66] This is in evidence in the *Vie de sainte Margaret*, yet it can also be seen in the Lives of Christine and Euphrosine mentioned earlier, where the saint's identity as God's spouse overlays her prior relationships to him as a daughter and servant.

[67] Salih points out that virgin's identity depends on a desire for God that is 'difficult to contain within a heterosexual framework'. See 'Queering *Sponsalia Christi*', p. 156.

[68] See Wogan-Browne and Burgess, *Virgin Lives and Holy Deaths*, pp. xxiii—xxiv. This version of the Life appears in the same manuscript as the Lives of Richard and Foy mentioned earlier. I refer to MacBain's edition of Clemence's poem.

[69] See Batt, 'Clemence of Barking's Transformations of *Courtoisie*'; *SLWLC*, p. 117 and 227—45; Robertson, 'Writing in the Textual Community'; and MacBain, 'Anglo-Norman Women Hagiographers'.

saint's life – in a celestial as opposed to a terrestrial setting.' Wogan-Browne has similarly suggested that Clemence critiques the courtly encoding of (implicitly masculine) desire and the fantasies it constructs, through her depiction of the continually frustrated human passion of the emperor Maxentius and the scrutiny to which this desire is subjected by the saint.[70] The interest of this version of the *Vie de sainte Catherine* here partly concerns the engagement between this text and other, contemporary articulations of desire in non-religious literature.[71] Clemence's text, precisely because of its exceptional literary qualities, provides an innovative and complex rendering of the renegotiation of desire that one finds in saints' lives such as those I have mentioned, particularly with regard to the use of virginity and marriage.

In a similar manner to Margaret, Catherine is an exemplary combination of virgin bride and Christian militant, lover of Christ and *miles Christi*. The first description of the saint paints her as a learned bride of Christ, whose intellectual and emotional fulfilment is arrived at through the channelling of desire (*desir*) towards God:

> Sages ert mult de choses mundaines,
> Mais sun desir ert as suvereines.
> En Deu mist tute sa entente,
> Sa valur, sa bele juvente.
> Tuz ses mortels amanz despit
> Et a nent mortel amant se prist,
> La ki amur est chaste et pure
> Et dunt deliz tut tens dure.
> (Ca, ll. 145—52)

The virgin saint's conventional rejection of human suitors for love of God thus appears alongside what might be described as her 'intellectual desire' for him as a symbol of *choses suvereines*. It is nonetheless important to stress that distinctions such as 'emotional' or 'intellectual' have little significance when considered in terms of the saint's love of God. Catherine's desire, like that of Margaret and Juliana, implies a complex attachment to both a system and a celestial bridegroom, an attachment that is necessarily all-encompassing and absolute. The saint's love of God is therefore perhaps best described as a form of investment: Catherine puts everything she has into her relationship to Christ, including *sa entente*, *valur*, *juvente* and *amur*. The nuptial connotation of the saint's desire for God thus expresses a complex form of love, in which the virgin's intellectual, material, emotional and sexual longings are focused in one place: Christ.

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[70] *SLWLC*, p. 117.
[71] For explorations of the connections between hagiography and other contemporary genres see Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, esp. pp. 216—58; Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*. On earlier periods, see *RTP*.

The extent to which this form of desire links love and faith, virginity and wisdom is illustrated in Catherine's defence of her Christian faith to the clerks, where her role as a *miles Christi* becomes more apparent.[72] Catherine's prowess, unlike that of virgins such as Margaret, is a product of her erudition rather than her physical force. In her dramatic showdown with the emperor Maxentius's most learned clerks, Catherine is faced with an intellectual enemy that she must vanquish through arguments that prove the truth of her Christian faith. That this argumentative combat is still considered as a form of military service is made clear from Catherine's description of the challenge facing her: when the emperor fails to offer her any reward if she claims victory over his clerics, Catherine retorts,

> '[…]
> Ta pramesse ne dut ne n'aim
> Kar mun gueredun de lui claim,
> Pur ki amur el champ sui mise
> E ceste bataille ai enprise.
> Mais une rien vus voil preer
> — Nel me deiz pas par dreit veier;
> Se mun Deu me dune victoire
> Que jo venque ta veine gloire,
> Que puis le voilles aurer
> E lui servir e amer.'
> (Ca, ll. 653—62)

As Catherine's words to Maxentius imply, her wisdom is not simply an intellectual weapon; it is also a vehicle of her faith and a means of defending her love of God (which is ultimately the same thing as her faith).[73] Catherine's choice of language invokes the lexis of epic or chivalric romance, casting her in the role of the knight fighting on behalf of his lord or lady (possibly both).[74] Like Lancelot or Tristan, Catherine places herself in the field (*el champ*) to defend the honour of her beloved, a beloved from whom she later hopes to claim her reward (*gueredun*). Yet the saint also undertakes a combat in which she hopes both to overcome God's enemy and to force that enemy to submit to his superior force. Catherine's rhetorical skirmish with the clerks is thus vaunted as a form of *combat judiciaire* that emulates and parodies similar battles in works of courtly romance. Indeed, in this context, it seems appropriate that

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[72] Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 61—63.

[73] This is affirmed by Catherine in the debate with the clerks that ensues, when she claims that her early education served merely to reinforce the sense that human philosophy is far inferior to knowledge of God: 'Certes tun sen pris jo petit | e mult l'ai jo pois presié poi | que mun Deu conuistre soi. | Pois que lo oi parler de li, | tutes voz falses arz guerpi | des queles ere ainz si sage | que el munde n'oi per de mun eage.' (Ca, ll. 686—92). To 'know' (*conuistre*) God here implies a knowledge based on faith which, as I have already suggested, invokes meanings which cannot be confined to the purely intellectual.

[74] Robertson explores this connection in relation to Thomas's version of the Tristan legend in 'Writing in the Textual Community'.

Catherine's battle with the clerks should so neatly combine the loyalties to one's beloved and to one's lord that are so often conflicted in the cases of exemplary Arthurian knights such as Lancelot. The saint's victory takes an oblique swipe at the principle of 'might is right' that implicitly informs such combats: the (supposedly) unequivocal truth that is brought to light as a result of Catherine's prowess is the result of logical argument rather than brute force. As the saint's Life subsequently suggests, the persecuting emperor Maxentius is the one character who subscribes to this correlation between supreme right and supreme violence, and he is presented as the most emotionally and spiritually defeated of all.

Later in the poem, Catherine's desire for God is explicitly juxtaposed with other forms of love, most notably with the transformed desires of the empress and the futile, materially fixated desire of Maxentius. This has the effect of emphasising how the nuptial motif found in the Lives of many of the virgin martyrs operates in a much broader context, revealing more explicitly what is at stake in the depictions of marriage and desire I have already discussed. Catherine's desire for God is not the only desire to get the nuptial treatment in this text: the emperor Maxentius's wife also takes God as her spouse. However, this betrothal begins with the empress' desire not for Christ but for Catherine. After agonising over whether she might visit the nubile young virgin of whom she has heard so much, and for whom she feels great pity, the empress finally approaches Porphiry, one of the princes at court, to tell him of a dream she has had. This dream involves the maiden she has recently been thinking about so much; the empress reveals how Catherine has appeared to her in an almost blinding blaze of light and, naming her 'empress', has placed a crown on her head which the virgin declares to be a gift from Christ (Ca, ll. 1526—48). Since having the dream, the empress laments, she has been unable to sleep or rest:

> '[...]
> Einz sui mise en tel travail,
> Que d'altre rien penser ne vail.
> En ço ai mis tut mun desir,
> Que veer la poisse e oir.
> [...]'
> (Ca, ll. 1551—54)

On one level, the *travail* that the empress describes acts as a reminder of the physical torments that Catherine suffers for Christ, sufferings to which the empress will similarly submit later on. In relation to her dream, however, the empress' suffering has another significance, invoking the painful drama of separation and desire often articulated by the subject in lyric poetry. Catherine's absence, like that of the beloved, is a source of

suffering and distress; like the lover, the empress focuses obsessively on the object of her desire, thinking only of seeing and hearing her again.[75]

Appropriately, the empress' dream is also reminiscent of coronation scenes in the lives of female martyrs such as Foy and Agnes, where the saint is crowned either during her martyrdom or as she enters the kingdom of heaven and, in some cases, both before and after her physical death. In saints' lives, these scenes enact the rewards that await the saint once she has given her life to God, signifying the privileged position that she will occupy in heaven as a result of her sacrifice. The empress' dream thus anticipates the martyrdom that she will eventually perform, even before she has devoted herself to God. Yet the scene that occurs in her dream reworks the conventional dynamics of the virgin martyr's coronation. Although the empress receives the crown as a gift from Christ, she does so before her conversion, in ignorance of who or what Christ is. As a result, the desire that this scene reinforces in the empress is not a desire for union with God (as it is in the case of the virgin saint); rather, her coronation affirms her desire for the saint who confers this gift.

When the empress finally visits Catherine in prison, her dream is re-enacted in such a way as to overlay the earlier expression of her desire for the saint with nuptial meaning. Having crowned the empress, the saint explains that she has prayed for her conversion and asks that both she and Porphiry be joined with her as companions in the Christian faith. The heavenly host inform Catherine that her prayer has been heard and that she will be united with her *espus* for all eternity (Ca, ll. 1609—30). Turning to the empress, Catherine then invites her to take Christ as her spouse, telling her that 'mun Deu a ses noces t'envie' (Ca, l. 1634) and encouraging her neither to fear her earthly husband Maxentius nor to have 'mais desir de s'amur' (Ca, ll. 1636—42).

This episode presents a complex framing of the nuptial trope. The scene rewrites the empress' original longing for Catherine as form of mimetic desire embodied and articulated by the saint herself. Just as Catherine is a bride of Christ promised union with her spouse in the next life, so the empress is invited to embrace the heavenly rewards that await her saintly counterpart, by abandoning her pagan husband and devoting herself to a celestial bridegroom. This spiritual polygamy, wherein one bride procures another for her husband, echoes an earlier suggestion made to Catherine by Maxentius, where he offers her a privileged place just below that of the empress, as his second wife (Ca, ll. 1261—72). The distinction between Maxentius's offer and that

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[75] Calin points to the irony implicit in the fact that Catherine – who rejects the emperor's advances – is not beyond using her charms to seduce the empress (and jailers). The parallel between Catherine and Maxentius is a fertile one for a queer reading of the *Vie*. 'Saints' Stories', p. 37.

made by Catherine to the empress is that choosing to become part of a heavenly harem involves an alliance with superior forms of love and power: Maxentius, Catherine claims, offers uncertain, ephemeral versions of qualities perfected in God; the empress should therefore follow the saint's example and place 'tut [son] desir' in Christ (Ca, ll. 1657—60).

However, the broader context for the nuptial desire promoted by the saint is that of a union with God that is not specific to the female bride, but which is nonetheless based upon desire (*desir*). Catherine's exhortation appears alongside a request that *both* Porphiry and the empress be converted, a conversion that makes them all companions (*cumpaniuns*) in a shared faith. In a speech that follows her words to the empress, Catherine explains to Porphiry the joys that await them all in heaven, characterising the celestial community of which they will become a part as a court presided over by Christ and the Virgin Mary. In this account, Christ is at once immortal king, son and father to his queen (the Virgin), lord over those martyrs who have given their lives for him and beloved of chaste maidens and lovers (*amanz*). Although Catherine describes this vision of heaven at some length, she stresses the fact that the *grant joie* that one finds in this celestial community is inexpressible in human terms: it is only known to God's adherents (*feelz*) if they have a perfect desire (*voleir*) for it (Ca, ll. 1670—1796).

What is remarkable about this description of heaven is the way it expands the marital trope associated with the saint and the empress. Rather than being *supplanted* by a vision of desirable heavenly community, the nuptial metaphor (and the forms of union and desire that it implies) seems intrinsic to this community. As mentioned in connection with the *Vie de sainte Juliane*, marriage to God is construed as a polygamous rather than a monogamous affair and, in this sense, already implicitly establishes relations that are simultaneously restricted and communal. Catherine's description adds a further dimension to this dynamic by suggesting that it underwrites an ideal of heavenly community available to all: Christ is celebrated, loved and desired by all those who participate in (and thereby constitute) this society. Moreover, the choir of chaste brides that Catherine and the empress will presumably join through marriage to Christ is explicitly mentioned as an integral part of the heavenly court, where they worship their lord together (*cumunalement*) with the knights, apostles, doctors of the Church and confessors who similarly love, serve and praise God (Ca, ll. 1773—84).

This is not to say that sex and gender have no place in this vision of community. On the contrary, the relationship between the particular and the universal, the subject and the object of faith is partly articulated through distinctions between what are

perceived to be 'normal' male and female sexual categories. It is by occupying a role as a bride in a kinship system different from that of the terrestrial world that the saint is able to articulate a relationship to Christ that nonetheless exceeds any simple classification as marriage. Yet it should be underlined that in the case of virgin saints marriage connotes an access to the divine that is potentially universal by virtue of being evacuated of its human content. Spiritual marriage at once inscribes desire for God and desire for a place in heavenly kinship and community; it simultaneously invokes individual and collective forms of love and worship. Nuptiality is therefore neither simply a means of sexualising female saints nor simply an expression of an unremittingly misogynistic denial of the flesh. Seen in relation to the narrative structures that saints' lives take such pains to construct, the function of marriage is to incorporate and to overcome such particularities by locating them within a system in which the only relationship that matters is an inherently overdetermined, necessarily transgressive relationship of faith.

2.5. Coda: Kinship and Desire in Saints' Lives

Returning, then, to the interface between kinship, death and desire, I have suggested that saints' lives construct a sphere of ethical activity associated with a form of death-in-life, a sphere in which the human boundaries of kinship are seen in contrast to the forms of desire sanctioned within an alternative set of spiritual kin relations. The passage beyond human kinship in saints' lives is not simply a recuperation of the forms of kinship and desire that normative social relations make liveable: those forms of desire that are forbidden in social contexts are also seen as recoverable. Thus, the incestuous relationships and desires of saints such as Gregory and Christine, although criminal in a human environment, are rehabilitated by their inclusion in a spiritual universe where their illegitimate status is transformed. Likewise, in the case of the virgin's relationship to God, the conditions that guarantee the legality of human marriage are re-formed through their contact with a field of spiritual relations, with the result that the virgin's union with Christ (as well as her desire for such a union) becomes transgressively overdetermined, and thus potentially queer.

The message of the saints' lives examined here implicitly relies on such redefinitions of the terms on which certain forms of desire are sanctioned or made taboo within social contexts. The primary exclusion in establishing and sustaining a spiritual economy reliant upon queer forms of kinship and desire is the restrictions to which kinship and desire are subject in human contexts. The shift between human and divine

kinship therefore involves a crucial change of emphasis when (re-)establishing what forms of desire are permissible. Like the zone between two deaths outlined by Lacan, the domain of queer spiritual desire is not a space in which the law is flouted, it is a dimension that is utterly indifferent to human law. The desires that saints' lives sanction are therefore precisely those forms of desire that are not – to use Butler's terms – 'liveable': kinship and the forms of desire that it makes possible (and impossible) can only legitimately be lived at the point at which these relationships engender social, symbolic and physical death. As a result, the transformative effect of queer depictions of kinship and desire in saints' lives is, on the whole, limited to the shift in perspective with which these depictions are associated, a perspective that enables the subject to occupy a position where the norm becomes inferior or abject, rather than inevitable. The challenge that these narratives pose to the normative social networks that they invoke and transform in a fictional setting is thus inevitably limited by the spiritual context in which their redefinition of kinship takes place. It should, indeed, be underlined that saints' lives are in many ways immensely conservative with respect to their depiction of possible and impossible relations. Hagiography does not advocate the reorganisation of human kinship; rather, its ethos is based upon maintaining human kinship as the inferior alternative to spiritual alliance, thereby excluding that which materially obstructs the unimpeded flow of desire towards the divine. In a space where, theoretically, everything is permitted, what must be excluded is the restrictive human content of social life itself.

As this would suggest, the demystification of kinship and desire that one finds in saints' lives thus lays the groundwork for an alternative illusion that re-establishes the law, the outcome of this process being that this foundational illusion becomes desirable in and of itself. The saint, instead of desiring human love, marriage or inheritance, refuses the system that makes those things desirable by asserting that they are both attainable and disappointing. The alternative is invariably a divine law that promises to deliver a surfeit of love, marriage and inheritance, yet without the restrictions that human systems place upon them. It is this vision of a community of queer connections unrestricted by either physicality or human authority that the saint reveals through his or her exemplary desire, a desire that focuses on a space filled by a series of shifting, unstable, unspeakable objects which resolve into the figure of God, the founder and embodiment of Christian law.

By constructing an alternative fantasy of spiritual kinship that recuperates that which is renounced in human contexts, hagiography clearly falls short of occupying the

atheistic ethical territory that Lacan marks out between the two deaths;[76] it similarly fails, in terms of Butler's project, to redefine what is considered to be liveable kinship. Nevertheless, we must, I think, entertain the possibility that saints' lives trouble more than they intend. As seen in Clemence's *Vie de sainte Catherine*, the dividing line between queer spiritual desire and the human desire that it haunts is not always as clearly drawn as it might be. Although the queer potential of hagiography may have been relatively limited in its contemporary medieval settings, this literature nonetheless suggests that queer forms of sexuality and desire perform a crucial function in communicating the orthodox concerns of a large body of religious texts from this period.

The next chapter will consider how such a relational model informs community in saints' lives. In addition to examining how kinship and community might come together in particular texts, I will also reflect on how the spaces of unliveable and often queer connectivity that saints' lives construct for their audiences might provide the foundations for communal relations in this literature. In so doing, I will explore how the connections on which community is based in saints' lives are implicated in the way these texts mediate between their audiences and God. I will also consider the contribution that readings of saints' lives might make to modern reflections on community, suggesting how the transgressive nature of kinship and community in saints' lives might be brought to bear on the less orthodox connections that these texts might mediate in the present.

[76] This is Žižek's point in *On Belief* (see above, Ch. 1.5., n. 48). Mills and Kay have both noted that the martyr traverses the fantasy as a means of creating a fantasmic screen that conceals the abyss of the Real. Mills, 'A Man is Being Beaten' (esp. pp. 135—6), Kay, 'The Sublime Body' and *Courtly Contradictions*, p. 231.

3
Community

> If we want to imagine [...] that the oppressed subject gains agency by means of identifications with others who elude resemblance, let us imagine the widest possible usable field of others with whom to make such partial connections. Let us imagine a process that engages all kinds of differences, though not in the same ways [...]. Thus [...] the medieval, as well as other dank stretches of time, becomes itself a resource for subject and community formation and materially engaged coalition building. By using this concept of making relations with the past we realize a temporal dimension of the self and of community.
> (Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 21.)

This chapter is concerned with community: that is, community as an imaginary and always ideological relationship to others.[1] It is also concerned with the relationship between community and texts or, more specifically, the role that medieval texts might have played in creating spaces where a sense of community might germinate and take root in the world outside them. As this chapter will demonstrate, these are themes with which vernacular saints' lives are very much concerned. The formation and confirmation of Christian community is axiomatic to the hagiographic project as a whole and, in some vernacular lives, provokes a certain amount of reflection on the processes that contribute to this important textual (and extra-textual) function. It is not just medieval hagiographers who are interested in such issues, however. As indicated by the above quotation, questions of community have an increasing currency in debates taking place in medieval studies, as elsewhere. In a postmodern universe where God is dead (or unconscious), issues of identification, resemblance and connectivity have become fraught but nonetheless urgent and anxiously debated concerns. The extent to which community is possible in the present – or, more accurately, the extent to which it is possible as an impossibility – is a question that shapes the contours of our relationship to the past and its texts as well as to each other.

I will return to consider aspects of these contemporary debates – and Dinshaw's work in particular – in Sections 3.4. and 3.5., where I will draw out some of the contiguities between community formation in hagiography and attempts to rethink and reformulate community in an excoriated, postmodern form. Before doing so, however, I will first explore in more depth how community is represented in vernacular saints' lives and how it relates to the themes discussed in Chapters One and Two. I considered

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[1] Anderson's notion of imagined community is a good example of this: see *Imagined Communities*.

at the end of the last chapter how kinship and community might be related to one another in the *passiones* of virgin martyrs such as Juliana and Catherine. I also explored how the relationships on which such notions of community are based might be transformed in saints' lives as part of an ideological project that associates these relationships with a domain of sublime, extra-social and potentially queer desire. My concern in this chapter will be to consider further how contact with this domain is related to interpretation or reading and how medieval audiences were encouraged to make contact with – or, in Dinshaw's terms, to touch – the divine in ways that rely on hermeneutic (as well as affective) processes. More particularly, I will examine how such processes constitute – or aim to constitute – community as part of the text's religious project.

This chapter therefore divides roughly into two parts. The first section considers how kinship and community are related and how reading has a constitutive role in the formation of community within and outside the text. This discussion focuses on two, thirteenth-century Anglo-Norman *passiones* which associate the formation of textual community with what I have called elsewhere 'hermeneutic vision', that is, with modes of reading that present meaning as an immanent as opposed to a transcendent property of objects and events.[2] It is striking that the best examples of such conjunctions come from Anglo-Norman *passiones* dating from the late thirteenth century;[3] however, I would emphasise that the particular treatment of issues relating to reading and the construction of community in these texts is related to the ethos of vernacular hagiography more broadly. The Anglo-Norman texts I will discuss here articulate connections between modes of reading and community building that subtend other hagiographic narratives, narratives which similarly aim to consolidate community through processes of interpretation that present reading and experiencing as effectively the same thing.

The second part of this chapter explores another dimension of community formation in saints' lives by considering connections between community and queer desire in different versions of the *Vie de Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne*. In this section, I return to consider Dinshaw's notion of queer community, using her work as a means of reflecting on what relationship might be possible between the communities of medieval saints' lives and the postmodern communities that encounter the past as a fragmented and always unstable basis for the affirmation of identities in the present. I thus consider

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[2] See Campbell, 'Sacrificial Spectacle'.

[3] Another example not discussed in this chapter is Simon of Walsingham's *Vie de Sainte Fey*, which is of a similar date.

how critical engagement with medieval saints' lives in the present might be seen in terms of queer connection and community. This relationship with the past, unlike that posited by Dinshaw, tries to make connections between medieval communities and their modern shadows not on the basis of contiguous marginalities but instead as part of a reading process that communicates with the queer potential of medieval texts and the communities they underwrite by unravelling their constitutive fictions.

3.1. Textual Community

The relationship between reading (in a broad sense) and the formation of community in certain medieval contexts has been usefully described in the work of Brian Stock. Investigating some of the possible ramifications of the impact of literate communication in eleventh- and twelfth-century Western Europe, Stock suggests a number of ways in which a consciousness of literate models was used to structure individual and collective modes of thought and behaviour in this period.[4] He argues that the transition from a primarily oral culture to a culture that was increasingly based on written modes of communication had a significant – indeed definitive – effect on the processes whereby subjective experience and historical change were interpreted and given meaning. In so doing, Stock aims to blur some of the boundaries that are often drawn between 'oral' and 'written' cultures, asserting the interdependence of oral and written traditions and insisting on the ways in which these traditions exerted influence over one another.[5] The later medieval consciousness of texts did not, therefore, do away with oral traditions altogether; rather, it established a discursive space in which the patterns of authority associated with oral culture could be reinvented and re-established in the context of the increasingly visible – although not necessarily intelligible – written word.

Within this transitional setting, texts and the awareness of literary models that they generated both coloured lived experience and mediated between orally-transmitted ideas and social change. One of the ways in which Stock claims the textual mediation that he describes took place was through the adoption of textual models of behaviour in the formation of communities and groups based on the interpretation of texts. It is on this basis that Stock advances a theory of what he terms 'textual communities': groups that employed an awareness of texts to structure their interactions and thus to form a sense of solidarity and shared identity.[6] The notion of textual community proposed by Stock does not rely on the presumption that communities were formed around their

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[4] Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* and *Listening for the Text*.
[5] On this point see *Listening for the Text*, pp. 140—58.
[6] See Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*; and *Listening for the Text*, pp. 16—29 and 140—158.

common ability to read written versions of texts. Stock's point is instead that the foundation of this type of community was the *communication and interpretation of texts*; the text could be orally performed and assimilated into the group, just as it could be incorporated by other kinds of reading practice. His contention is therefore that, whether or not script was mediated orally, the text – as both a physical and mental object – increasingly provided a locus of authority and the means of community formation for groups engaged in performing and interpreting texts on a variety of levels.

Taking my cue from Stock's analysis, I will explore in the first section of this chapter how reading, as a practice that involves the communication of experience based on texts, might be connected to notions of community in saints' lives in the French vernacular. This discussion will begin by considering how reading is connected to the formation of (and participation in) a concept of community such as that described in Chapter Two, particularly as this concerns the implication of hermeneutic processes in translating human into divine affiliation. I will suggest how hagiographic literature might represent this mode of reading on a number of different levels within the text itself and what role this depiction of interpretation might play in situating these texts in relation to their readers and audiences. In investigating the connections between reading and community I will therefore suggest how the representation of community formation within the text and the role that the text plays in the constitution of extra-textual community might be linked hermeneutically and, moreover, what might be at stake in bringing these two communities together through such hermeneutic links.

For the sake of facility I will be using the term 'reading' to refer to those forms of interpretation that have their basis in texts; this would therefore include the interpretation of both the oral and the written forms of a text. More precisely, I will be considering how saints' lives demonstrate an awareness of hermeneutic processes such as those described by Stock, suggesting that the kind of community formation he outlines is actively encouraged by a number of vernacular saints' lives of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In other words, hagiographic texts of this period not only lend themselves to forms of interpretation that might consolidate notions of Christian community, but also encourage this kind of reading as a matter of representational policy.

3.2. Kinship and Community in the *Vie de saint Eustache*

The legend of Eustace was enormously popular in the Middle Ages: in the French vernacular alone there are more than twenty-one extant versions of the saint's Life dating from between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. The present discussion is based on the 'Cheltenham' version of the Life: a text written in Anglo-Norman in the first half of the thirteenth century.[7]

The story begins by describing how a Roman nobleman called Placidus converts to Christianity after seeing a vision of Christ figured in the antlers of a stag he encounters while out hunting. As a result, he has both himself and his family secretly baptised and takes Eustace as his Christian name. Eustace is then warned in a second vision that he will be tested by God. There follows from this a series of adventures during which Eustace is forced to leave his home and country, his wife is abducted by lusty sailors and his two sons are carried off by lions as he is trying to get them across a river. Subsequent to these misfortunes, Eustace ends up working in a village where he has no status or connections. These trials serve to confirm Eustace in his faith and establish him as a true servant of God. After fifteen years of hardship and poverty in exile, Eustace is eventually persuaded to return to his home and – through divine intervention – is subsequently reunited with his family while on conquest. When a tyrannical pagan emperor accedes to power, however, Eustace's problems begin once more and he and his family are tortured before finally being martyred for their Christian faith and taken into the kingdom of heaven.

This saint's life, which clearly has many features in common with romance, nonetheless depicts a saintly trajectory found in many contemporary hagiographic texts, a trajectory that emphasises the saint's rejection of the world and his privileging of spiritual over terrestrial relationships.[8] Eustace is enjoined by the divine lord to whom he pledges himself to renounce the mortal world (*guerpir le mortel*, Eu, l. 746) in order to conquer the heavenly kingdom he is promised by God; the saint's patient endurance of his exile and of the loss of his family are thus both a proof of faith and part of the

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[7] This version, formerly contained in Cheltenham, Phillipps, MS 4156, is now held by Yale University (see Appendix 4, entry 14). The possible Continental origin of the *Vie* is noted in Dean and Boulton, p. 299 (entry 541). See *Eustace*, ed. by Petersen-Dyggve (1922).

[8] For comparison of the *Vie* with romance, see Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 234—39. For sources and analogues of the saint's life in Greek romance, medieval legend, chivalric romance and Indian folktale, see Delehaye, 'La Légende de saint Eustache'.

service he performs for God.[9] The importance of Eustace's alienation is underlined by the saint himself, as he continually draws attention to his removal from social and family networks in lamenting the sufferings that he is forced to undertake:

> Jo guardoue ja par maistrie
> Le pople e la chevalerie
> [...]
> Mes jo vois ore mendiant
> Sanz compainnie, sanz sergant.
> Jo me soleie reaiter
> Od mes fiz e od ma mulier,
> Mes jo sent ore sanz confort,
> Un dol mult anguisus e fort.
> (Eu, ll. 1095—1104)[10]

Eustace thus emphasises his exclusion from those kinship structures that previously provided him with social and emotional support: he is without *compainnie* or household and he is bereft of both his children and his wife. Eustace's former engagement in worldly affairs through the relationships that bound him to a wider social environment is here contrasted with his present isolation from those structures, a contrast emphasised by the use of the adverbs *ja* and *ore*, which underline the distinction between the saint's past life as a head of household surrounded by servants, knights and kin, and his present circumstances as an isolated and miserable beggar.

As Eustace himself later points out, this removal from worldly kinship eventually leads him to place absolute faith in Christ and to seek comfort and consolation in God rather than in the transient relationships that he enjoyed in his former life. This psychological abandonment of family and kin echoes the saintly trajectories seen in the texts examined in the previous chapter, where the saint isolates him- or herself from family ties in order to establish an alternative relation to God that is situated outside social norms. In a similar way to the Lives of saints such as Alexis, Gregory and Euphrosine, the *Vie de saint Eustache* underlines this shift in priorities once the saint's relationship to God has been made apparent by restoring the family that Eustace thought he had lost. As in the cases of these other saints, neither Eustace's return to the service of the emperor nor the rediscovery of his family are an

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[9] In this sense, Eustace is similar to Job, a comparison that the saint makes himself in many versions: see, for example, in the Anglo-Norman Life discussed here, ll. 1114—38; in the alexandrine version in BN, f. fr. 1555 (*Eustace*, ed. by Petersen-Dyggve (1924)), ll. 243—48 (pp. 145—6); in the prose version edited by Murray, str. XV, ll. 12—15 (and the Latin text in the same edition: str. XV, ll. 7—9). See also Boureau, 'Narration cléricale', p. 50; Delehaye, 'La Légende de saint Eustache', pp. 5 and 8.

[10] A similar passage appears in the French prose Life, where Eustace laments his exile in similar terms: 'Ha! las, qui fui mestres des chevaliers: riches d'amis e honorez de mes voisins: or sui seus e despris e sanz confort e sanz compaignie.' See *Eustace*, ed. by Murray, str. XV, ll. 6—9.

endorsement of worldly values; Eustace's reinstatement as courtier, husband and father is instead an illustration of the transformative influence of faith on the saint's relationship to social networks. Eustace, like Alexis, returns to a domestic setting not in order to restore the status quo but instead as a means of highlighting how the saint's spiritual affiliation affects his relationship to the family network from which he was separated. Moreover, Eustace's reintegration into social networks appears as the consequence of his relationship to God: at almost every stage of his reintroduction to the society from which the saint has been alienated, we are made aware that God has a hand in the implausible coincidences leading up to Eustace's reunion with his family. The integrity of the family is thus not seen as a social or emotional given but as the product of Eustace's absolute faith in Christ, a faith that places his relationship to God above the human kinship that the saint eventually rediscovers.

What is remarkable about the *Vie de saint Eustache* from the perspective of community is the way it translates family relations into relations of Christian kinship and community. This transition is emphasised when almost immediately after Eustace and his family have been brought back together they are subject to religious persecution by a newly appointed pagan emperor. The reconstituted Christian family, instead of settling into a relaxing domestic routine, becomes a group of religious militants who suffer and die together for their belief in God. Kin relations are thus represented as underscored by a common faith and family is rewritten as a form of what I will term 'sacrificial community': a community or group bound together by an experience of sacrifice performed in the name of a mutually-held belief. In the case of Eustace and his family, sacrifice serves to re-emphasise the fact that the family's connections to one another are already grounded in a shared Christian faith; but, more importantly, it also enables that faith to be translated into a mutual performance of Christian belief through sacrifice. I choose to describe this in terms of community because the bonds between family members that sacrifice both reveals and establishes privilege a form of kinship founded on the communal performance of faith rather than on the connections between family members established in the context of human society.

This shift from human kinship to sacrificial community is in fact implicit in the narration of the family's persecution.[11] Eustace, his wife and their two sons are described as a band of *seins martirs* supported by God in the fight against a cruel and tyrannical enemy (*cruël aversier*, Eu, l. 1942). Throughout this section of the poem the

[11] Delehaye notes that this martyrdom is unusually condensed in that it does not include the normal catalogue of tortures, dialogues and miraculous incidents found in other *passiones*. See 'La Légende de saint Eustache', p. 9.

family speaks and responds as one, the most remarkable example of this being a prayer of seventy-five lines entirely in the first person plural, which the members of the family unanimously address to God as they are being roasted alive. The prayer begins with a collective meditation on the sacrifice of Christ, a sacrifice which the martyrs claim obliges them to suffer in return (Eu, ll. 1993—2004); the martyrs then request that 'cels qui ferunt memorie | de nus' be offered help, comfort and salvation (Eu, ll. 2005—20). Finally, the martyrs ask that they be spared some of the pain of torture in order that they might (among other things) worship more effectively and, having taken care of the Christian community's salvation, make an appeal for their own entry into heaven (Eu, ll. 2021—68).

The prayer thus anticipates some of the functions that the family – as a band of martyrs – will assume in their role as intercessors on behalf of the Christian community: the martyrs pray not only on their own behalf but also on behalf of those who will remember their example as an act of deference to the God they worship.[12] Another significant feature of this extended appeal is how it pre-empts the discourse of community that will resurface at later stages of the poem, particularly in the traditional call to prayer found in the conclusion of the story. The martyrs' unanimous address closes with an entreaty that would not look out of place at the end of any typical hagiographic text:

> 'Pur çoe desirum dulcement
> La joie pardurablement,
> La grant dulçur, qui est estable,
> En la grant vie pardurable.
> O, Jhesucrist, omnipotent!
> Nus prïum merciablement
> Ke tu voilles, par tun pleisir,
> Nus e nostre prïere oïr.'
> (Eu, ll. 2061—68)

The prayer articulated by the martyrs is thus a communal discourse not only in the sense that it unites Eustace's family as a worshipping community, but also insofar as it implies an identification with other communities who might similarly reproduce such a discourse (a point that I will explore further in Section 3.2.2.). The final line of the quotation seems to encapsulate this identification in its equation of *nus* and *nostre prïere*, which distinguishes the speaking community and the prayer that it pronounces even as it implies their synonymity. The family as it articulates itself here in the *nus* is

[12] Similar episodes where the saint's supporters are given special mention before the saint's death occur in other texts. See for example *Julian*, ed. by Swan, ll. 1319—22; and *Juliana*, ed. by von Feilitzen, ll. 1233—46.

thus a communal entity of a discursive, religious kind, rather than a group distinguished by its social or consanguineous nature. This address marks the point at which the family 'becomes' a community of martyrs in a broader sense; in subsequent descriptions of Eustace, his wife and their children no further mention is made of their relationship to one another as a human family. All subsequent references to them are as 'li seint martyr', a collective appellation given reinforcement when, after their death, the bodies of the saints are miraculously preserved and, again, inspected *together* as a collective body of *cors seins* (Eu, l. 2128).

3.2.1. Community and Hermeneutics

As this would suggest, the formation of Christian community around the bodies of Eustace, his wife and their children is clearly dependent upon seeing them as a group of martyrs as opposed to a dead human family. The text represents this process by using the reading of the saints' bodies as a means of communicating the experience of conversion. Seeing the family as a group of martyrs who now reign in heaven is depicted as a form of shared religious experience that binds pagans and Christians together in a commonly held belief:[13]

Pur cel miracle maintenant
Vindrent la gent esjoïsant,
E les cors seinz mult esgarderent:
Unkes peil bruillez ne troverent,
Del feu ne del metal flambant
Ne virent rien aparisant
Entur les martyrs precïus,
Ki regnent el ciel glorïus.
Li poples dist esmerveillant
Od halte voiz esjoïsant:
'Li cristïen unt veirement
Un Deu verai omnipotent!
Nus devum Jhesucrist löer,
Ki tels miracles sout mustrer.'
(Eu, ll. 2147—2160)

This passage, through its emphasis on verbs of seeing such as *esgarderent*, *virent* and *troverent*, represents a process of interpretation based entirely upon visual experience; seeing and reading are thus elided. Furthermore, the fact that these verbs appear in the third person plural means that the acts of witness (and, in the case of *trover*, discovery, interpretation, or even poetic creation) they describe appear as communal activities. This notion of communal witness is also reflected in the use of the verb *mustrer* in the

[13] Cf. Cazelles's use of the Girardian notion of the scapegoat in describing how community forms around the saint's self-sacrifice. *Le Corps de sainteté*, pp. 9—10.

last line of the quotation, which implies a form of demonstrative, implicitly visual, proof. This passage thus gives the impression of shared visual experience while simultaneously invoking an interpretative model that makes looking synonymous with finding meaning beyond the physical object of the gaze. Moreover, the common reading of the bodies of the four saints as it is represented here provides the focus for the consolidation of Christian community. Seeing the incorrupt bodies of Eustace and his family becomes equated with seeing the bodies of martyrs who reign in heaven, leading firstly to a communal articulation of belief in the veracity of the Christian faith and secondly to a call to worship that unites converts and Christians alike under a common pronoun (*nus*). The miracle that is shown to the community thus involves an interpretative practice that reads physical bodies in terms of the metaphysical truths they evince; a hermeneutic process that at once produces faith and confirms it as an act of Christian community.[14]

To return briefly to Stock's notion of textual community, what is represented in this passage is a process whereby community is constituted through the mutual experience of symbolic reading, a reading in which the bodies of the martyred saints provide a physical basis for shared understanding. The leap from vision to comprehension of Christian truth involves a layering of perception whereby physical relics are invested with meanings that have metaphysical significance, and the formation of a community of believers is achieved through the shared experience that is the result of this kind of interpretation. It should of course be remembered that this interpretative process is itself being represented in a saint's life. Considered in these terms, what we find in this episode is a Christian community (the implied readers of the text) reading a community of believers reading the relics of a group of martyrs, who are themselves a part of a celestial community.

This layering of communities and readings points to something to which I will return in a moment; for, the community represented in this passage is not unproblematically 'textual' in Stock's sense of the term. The reading process as it is represented here conforms to the interpretative model promoted by the saint's life in which it appears, yet this process is quite emphatically depicted in a *textually unmediated* form. In other words, community formation as a phenomenon represented within the text involves spontaneous visual response to physical objects. Yet, at the same time, this response conforms to the type of reading that the saint's life is designed to encourage in its readers or listeners: a reading that is necessarily mediated by the text.

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[14] Cf. Boureau's discussion of 'herméneutique narrative' in the Latin *Vita*: 'Narration cléricale', pp. 49—52.

3.2.2. Interpellation

It is frequently the case that hagiographic epilogues address themselves to the consolidation of Christian community outside the text. In the epilogue to the *Vie de saint Eustache*, this consolidation involves appealing to those aspects of Christian kinship that the text both represents and helps to construct. As in most saints' lives, the author of the *Vie* addresses himself at the end of the poem to the Christian community on whose behalf he claims to be writing, an address which, as is conventionally the case, is made in the first person plural. What is repeatedly emphasised in these final passages is an ideal of Christian kinship that the saint and his family not only represent but also make attainable for the community as a whole. The exclusion from social networks that Eustace previously experienced during his exile is reworked by the epilogue to express a situation of spiritual exile, a situation in which all human beings supposedly find themselves on account of the fact that humankind was banished from Eden as a result of Adam's transgression. As was previously the case for Eustace, this exclusion from a celestial homeland is as much about one's isolation from relationships to others as it is about physical location. In this sense, the description of the paradise to which the exiled Christian community might return is clearly dependent on an idealised form of spiritual kinship:

> Kar al ciel la dulce charted
> Devum conquere par bunted.
> Plusurs parenz, plusurs amis
> Devum trover en cel païs,
> Ki pur nus sunt mult desirus
> En cel seint regne glorïus.
> Iloc sunt li angle chantant
> E tuit li seint esjoïsant
> (Eu, ll. 2255—2262)

In the light of points made in Chapter Two regarding the saint's rejection of the human content of kinship in favour of an alternative relational model, it is worth remarking on the fact that the concept of kinship represented in this quotation is based not so much upon consanguineous relations as it is upon socially enforceable kin alliances (*parenté* and *amitié*). This suggests a notion of celestial kinship that is also found in descriptions of the heavenly host found in other saints' lives, some of which – as I shall demonstrate later on – are even more explicit in invoking notions of *maisnie*, household or retinue.[15]

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[15] These addresses to the heavenly host as a collective body are reflected elsewhere in Christian ritual and liturgical practice (particularly in earlier periods), where saints are usually addressed as a community rather than as individuals. As Hahn indicates, the competitiveness of medieval cults from the 11th century onwards

The metatextual Christian community is thus invited to see the saintly company as their lost kin and is encouraged to do their best to ensure that these bonds of kinship may be restored.[16]

This invitation can be read as a form of interpellation, a term derived from the Althusserian notion that the subject as it is materialised through language is called into being when it recognises itself in the discourse that represents it (a form of recognition that is also therefore a misrecognition).[17] Interpellation itself is the call to being to which the subject responds, the representation of the subject that invites that subject to constitute itself within language and the ideology it supports.[18] This applies to the epilogue to the *Vie* insofar as what is represented here is a collective identity (or subjectivity) based upon notions of Christian kinship with which the reader or listener is invited to identify.[19] The use of the first person plural has an interpellative function in that it repeatedly invites the recognition of oneself in the community to which the 'we' or *nus* supposedly refers, thereby enabling the reader to see him- or herself as part of a community that must rediscover its alienated celestial kin.[20]

The company of martyrs therefore provides an example of the transition from human to spiritual kinship, while simultaneously playing a part in the process that encourages the Christians addressed by the text to themselves participate in such a transition. This is emphasised in the final lines of the epilogue, where we are told to pray to Eustace and his *seintime compaignie* that we might all become neighbours together in heaven:

> Devum prïer seint Euestace

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accompanies a greater degree of individuation, although saints are still seen as protectors of communities and members of the heavenly host. See Hahn 'Seeing and Believing'; McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints*, pp. 55—101; and Abou-El-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints*.

[16] On kinship as part of the performance of faith, cf. Mark 3. 33—35.

[17] Althusser, 'Idéologie'.

[18] Butler describes this call to being in the following terms: 'In the famous scene of interpellation that Althusser provides, the policeman hails the passerby with "hey you there" and the one who recognizes himself and turns around (nearly everyone) to answer the call does not, strictly speaking, preexist the call. [...] The act of recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence.' *Excitable Speech*, p. 25. See also Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, pp. 106—31.

[19] In her linguistic study of narrative viewpoints in medieval French literature Marnette has explored the significance of the use of the 1st person plural in saints' lives for the semantic connections forged between audience and narrator. In the texts that Marnette considers, the use of the *nous* has an associative function that unites the Christian community into a single (and univocal) body. As Marnette suggests, 'cela signifie que le narrateur et les auditeurs/lecteurs ne partagent pas seulement la situation d'énonciation ponctuelle que constitue la narration du récit mais appartiennent également au même monde idéologique.' (p. 52). Although fundamentally in agreement with Marnette's analysis, I would suggest that in relation to the *Vie de saint Eustache* this is taken a stage further: the *nous* here incorporates the audience and the narrator, yet it also applies to the heavenly company of saints who are their 'kin'. See Marnette, *Narrateur et points de vue*, pp. 51—75.

[20] Uitti discusses the use of the 1st person plural in connection with the formation of community around the hagiographic narrator. See 'The Clerkly Narrator Figure', pp. 394—7. See Schwartz's discussion of this in connection with the *ubi sunt* topos in French vernacular literature: "Those Were the Days", pp. 29—30.

Ke Deus ad eslit par sa grace
Od sa seintime compaignie,
En cele pardurable vie.
Les seinz martyrs nomeement
Devum prïer mult dulcement,
Ke Jhesucrist, par lur merite,
Nus doint od els joie parfite,
Ke nus puissum estre veisin
En la joie del ciel sanz fin.
(Eu, ll. 2281—2290)

In the last two lines of this quotation, the pronoun *nus* potentially encompasses both the terrestrial community and the company of saints to which that community should address their prayers. Regarding these martyrs in terms of the heavenly company that they have come to represent thus establishes the aspirations of a Christian community seeking to be their neighbours in paradise and, in so doing, gives new definition to the boundaries of that community. The physical community to whom the text is addressed is implicitly defined by its reading of the metaphysical company of saints. Although both groups are to be seen in terms of the relationships of faith that underpin heavenly kinship, each remains distinct insofar as the community on earth is encouraged to take that in heaven as both its model and its ultimate goal.

This reading gives pause for thought when considered in connection with a question posed earlier in this chapter: namely, how the representation of community and the invocation of community are connected to one another in this text, and in hagiographic texts more broadly. For, the shift from the representation of the community that venerates the saints to the exhortation to veneration found in the epilogue is not simply a shift from reading community to participating in it. The change in person, from the third person plural to the first person plural, from the 'they' of the second quotation to the 'us' of the third and fourth quotations would initially seem to invite such a reading. But what is suppressed in this shift is precisely that element of representation that makes both of these grammatical positions products of the text, a notion already implicit in the idea of interpellation just mentioned.

A more accurate description of what occurs in this transition between pronouns would be a shift from 'us reading *them* reading' to 'us reading *us* reading'. What is disavowed in this shift – and what therefore merges readership and performance – is an awareness of readership itself. What the saint's life ultimately presents us with is a representation of 'us' (*nus*) as a community contemplating the martyrs who are our celestial kin. The text therefore encourages us to insert ourselves into its construction of Christian kinship by identifying with the reading community represented within the

text, an identification that, as Althusser would point out, is inherently ideological. The *nus* thus acts as a form of Lacanian quilting point or *point de capiton*: a point where the signified and the signifier are stapled together, thereby halting the endless movement of signification to produce the illusion of a fixed meaning.[21] Žižek has described this point as 'the word to which "things" themselves refer to recognize themselves in their unity' a word that, on the level of the signifier itself, both fixes and constitutes the identity of that which refers to it.[22] In a similar way, then, the *nus* in the hagiographic epilogue acts as a unifying term that represents and constitutes Christian community precisely because it allows that community to recognise itself in its symbolic unity. As Žižek points out, however, in order to be effective the *point de capiton* requires an inversion to take place: the Christian readers of the text must identify themselves with the symbolic identity presented to them by the text. As noted above, this identification involves inhabiting the signifier as well as (and also instead of) contemplating it as part of the ideological tissue of the text. The use of the *nus* invokes a completion that can only be realised outside the text itself, through an identification that confuses reading and experience, subject and signifier, us and 'we'.

Considered in terms of Stock's idea of textual community, this would suggest that in saints' lives such as the *Vie de saint Eustache* the consolidation of Christian community is indeed textually mediated. Stock's understanding of textual community as 'a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organisation' relies on precisely the kind of interpellation and inversion described by Althusser and Žižek.[23] Within this setting, what a close examination of how this operates in particular saints' lives reveals is the extent to which the textual constitution of community is dependent on inhabiting the text as well as interpreting it. This, in turn, involves a symbiotic relationship between text and community that continually elides what might be described as the 'textuality' of one's experience both of the events described by the text and of the communities it creates. As I have argued, the textually based nature of community is often represented – and implicitly experienced – as a form of unmediated encounter rather than as a process of reading. What the *Vie* therefore presents us with is a layering of communities in which the shared experience that forges communal bonds is communicated by a reading process clearly generated by the text, while, at the same

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[21] The *point de capiton* refers to an upholstery button: like the upholstery button, the *point de capiton* holds together the otherwise unstable layers of the signifier and the signified, knotting them together to form a point of (illusory) fixity. Lacan, *Les Psychoses*; Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*, p. 149.
[22] Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 95—7 (p. 95).
[23] Stock, *Listening for the Text*, p. 150.

time, shifting the focus away from the text as the material object around which the community is formed. The first of these layers is represented by the community of martyrs whose experience of sacrifice moulds them into what I have described as a sacrificial community. The second layer incorporates the community of Christians and pagan converts, who find themselves united by a common experience of interpretation that enables them to share in the meaning of that sacrifice, if not in the sacrifice itself. Finally, the last layer is formed by the readers to whom the saint's life is addressed, readers whose connections to one another are consolidated through an interpretative experience generated by the text, yet whose identity as a community depends on the suppression of distinctions between the collectivity addressed within the text and the living community of readers outside it.

3.3. Sacrificial Community in the *Vie de seint Auban*

The way in which the experience of community is communicated through other hagiographic texts is not always based upon translated forms of kinship, as it is in the case of Eustace and his family. Nonetheless, the constitution of sacrificial communities and the interpellative function that this depiction of community can have in accounts of martyrdom frequently relies on acts of reading or interpretation similar to those discussed above. The way in which interpretation functions in this context suggests a relationship between reading, mimesis and community formation that will be given further attention here. What, for instance, forms the basis of a community materialised through such hermeneutic processes? How do these processes function mimetically and what role does this play in the communities that might be formed or reaffirmed through the text? What status does the spectacle and/or reading of sacrifice have within this context?

Some of these issues can be explored in connection with the Anglo-Norman Life of St Alban: a poem extant in only one manuscript, most probably written and illuminated by Matthew Paris between 1230 and 1240.[24] The poem's narrative structure is such that individual conversion and sacrifice are continually woven into communal conversion and sacrifice: the individual affirmation or performance of faith through sacrifice gives rise to (and sometimes retroactively cites) sacrifices performed by a group or community, and vice versa. This interrelationship of the singular and the

[24] The manuscript in which this vernacular Life appears is MS 177 of Trinity College Dublin. Although Legge believed that the epic form intended it for a male, non-monastic audience, the Life was associated with the baronial women readers of the court of Eleanor of Provence (notably Isabella of Arundel). See *ANLB*, p. 268; Lowe and Jacob, *Illustrations to the Life of St Alban*, pp. 16—17; *SLWLC*, pp. 109—10; 151—76; Dean and Boulton, pp. 280—81 (entry 506). I refer throughout to Harden's edition.

communal, in a similar way to that seen in the *Vie de saint Eustache*, is at least partly dependent on interpretation and the hermeneutic performance or mimesis that certain modes of reading set in place. In the *Vie de seint Auban*, however, this hermeneutic relationship appears in the context of a cyclical process of conversion and martyrdom that alternately foregrounds singular and collective participation in sacrificial community, a community that in this case invokes the warrior community of *chansons de geste*. The Life of St Alban thus develops the mimetic implications of the reading relationship described in the *Vie de saint Eustache* by representing a more conspicuous blurring of the distinction between the sacrificial community of saints and the Christian community that reads and responds to their martyrdom.

Before discussing community in this poem, it is worth remarking on the way the manuscript presents the acts of martyrdom it narrates through the titles and concluding comments that it uses to frame its textual divisions. The text begins by announcing itself as the 'Vie de seint Auban', yet within this general designation various subtitles announce the passions of other martyrs. Between lines 935 and 936, the poem informs us that 'ci cumence la passiun seint Aracle'; at the end of the section on Heraclius, we are told that this episode has concluded and that the 'passiun seint Amphibal' will now begin (Au, ll. 1052—53). Within this general design, a number of other martyrdoms take place which are not given separate titles, implicitly forming a part of both the *Vie* and the *passio* subsection in which they occur. In the closing lines of the poem, these various sacrifices and texts are brought together: we are informed that 'ci finist li rumantz de l'estoire de seint Auban le premer martir de Engletere e de seint Amphibal e de ses cumpainnuns'. The story that has been told is thus a story of individual *and* communal sacrifice.[25] Alban's martyrdom is seen alongside that of Amphibel and the other Christian martyrs, a parity that establishes a sacrificial community reliant upon *compagnonnage*: a spiritualised version of epic feudal relations that I will consider in more detail in a moment.

Although the first folio of the manuscript is missing, it is nonetheless clear from the extant text that from a relatively early stage in the poem questions of interpretation have a particular significance for processes of conversion and mimetic sacrifice on the one hand, and for the establishment of relationships of community on the other. Alban's conversion is the result of a dream that he is sent by God and of the subsequent

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[25] This interweaving is reflected in the illuminations, which represent individual martyrdom (notably the sacrifices of Alban, Heraclius and Amphibel on ff. 38r, 46r (misbound) and 45r respectively) as part of a narrative hagiography in which collective sacrifice is also represented (ff. 41v, 42r, 48r). See Lowe and Jacob, *Illustrations to the Life of St Alban*, plates 15, 19, 24, 25, 27, and 28. See also McCulloch's description of the illuminations: 'Saints Alban and Amphibalus', pp. 769—75.

interpretation of his divinely-inspired dream by the itinerant Christian preacher Amphibel. The distinction between the revelation Alban receives from God in his dream and the interpretation of this experience has an important function in articulating the different (yet interconnected) relationships that the saint's dream establishes. The vision that Alban receives in his sleep is described as a demonstration of the truth of Christian myth to one who has previously doubted its veracity: God, seeing Alban's incredulity, decides to 'soften him up' (*lui esmoillir le quoer*) by showing him (*lui mustrer*) the truth of the incarnation and crucifixion (Au, ll. 201—11).[26] While the dream is clearly intended to remove the doubts that Alban has regarding Amphibel's Christian faith, any meaning it might have nonetheless remains somewhat opaque. Alban's first action on waking up is not to announce his newly-discovered faith to Amphibel, but instead to ask the preacher to explain the significance of the dream he has just had, the implication being that although Alban has been shown the truth of the Christian faith, he lacks the tools with which to interpret and understand it.

As a result, Amphibel's interpretation of Alban's dream has a decisive role in cementing both the saint's commitment to Christianity and his relationship to Amphibel, who Alban claims as his tutor thereafter:

> Kar un sunge sungai, ne oistes unc le per.
> Si tu ke signifie me sez enseinner,
> Tu serras mi maistres e jo tis escoler.
> Jamais ne nus purra vie ne mort sevrer
> K'en vostre doctrine ne voille demurer.
> (Au, ll. 217—21)

Alban thus suggests that Amphibel's interpretation of his dream will introduce him to Christian doctrine through a teaching that reformulates for him the truth of an experience he has already had. The difference between the communication of the vision by God and the interpretation of the vision by Amphibel relies on degrees of understanding: the revelation Alban receives from God suggests the communication of an intuitive knowledge of Christian truth, whereas the meaning of the dream is represented to him only through a reading process that can integrate that intuitive understanding into the framework of Christian doctrine. Alban's language emphasises the pedagogical nature of this reading process by highlighting Amphibel's role as

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[26] Alban's dream is depicted in a quarter page illumination in the top right hand corner of f. 30v in this manuscript. The dream of the Annunciation, Crucifixion and Resurrection (all of which are labelled in French) appears in the top half of the image, above the sleeping saint. The image is explained by text that appears between the saint and his dream: 'Ci veit Auban en dorman*t* Qu*a*ncke A*m*phibal li dit ava*n*t. li cors dort me*s* lalme veille. keu ciel veit la g*ra*nt m*er*veille'. See Lowe and Jacob, *Illustrations to the Life of St Alban*, plate 2.

teacher (*maistre*) as well as interpreter, and Alban's position relative to him as the pupil (*escolier*) whose dream needs to be explained.

As such, the relationship that Alban anticipates will be initiated by Amphibel's reading of his dream is also a relationship to his tutor's Christian faith (*vostre doctrine*): Amphibel will not only be his master and teacher, but also his partner in a union impervious to attack by those situated outside the doctrine that Alban suggests will bind them together. What is already implicit in Alban's description of the relations he imagines between himself, Amphibel and the doctrine that will cement his connection to God is the potentially generalised nature of those relations. The *nus* articulated by Alban is a plural identity defined against those who remain outside Christian teaching. Moreover, the discursive framing of this opposition suggests a shared ideological territory which one either occupies or, alternatively, resists and attacks, reinforcing the sense in which relations based on Christian doctrine already lay claim to a communal identity that claims an ideological common ground.

The pedagogical relationship to Amphibel that Alban pre-emptively asserts both establishes Alban's attachment to the preacher and also acts as a reinforcement of the bond between Alban and God already represented by the communication of the vision. Amphibel's reading of the dream in fact performs both of these functions, enabling, on the one hand, the rearticulation of Alban's relationship to God in terms of community and alliance and, on the other hand, providing Alban with his first tutorial in Christian doctrine – a tutorial that Alban attends to 'cum clerc fait sa lesçun' (Au, l. 322). Alban, Amphibel tells him, has been moved by a vision of the crucifixion and resurrection sent to him directly from God; this vision makes a claim on Alban's allegiances and foreshadows his own martyrdom and assumption into the heavenly community:

> 'N'est par autre sermun, doctrine u language,
> Mes par avisiun vus a Deu mué le curage.
> Fai lui, cum fere deiz, lingance e humage;
> Aliance seit batesme e primer mariage,
> E ne eiez ja vers lui quor ligger ne volage;
> Kar tu murras pur lui martir par vasselage;
> Of lui regneras tuz jurs eu celestien barnage.'
> (Au, ll. 295—301)

This passage represents an act of interpellation similar to that seen in the *Vie de saint Eustache*; Alban, as an auditor presented with a condensed version of his own life – from miraculous dream, to conversion, to death – is encouraged to recognise himself for the first time as a Christian martyr. Amphibel's reading has the effect of situating Alban in a mimetic relationship to the scenes he has witnessed in his dream: like Christ, Alban

will suffer and die for God before ascending to heaven. Moreover, the singular significance of Alban's martyrdom (again, like that of Christ) also has a communal dimension, a dimension that Amphibel expresses in terms of feudal obligation. Alban's martyrdom will be at once the culmination of the allegiance and service (*lingance e humage*) that he will pledge to God, and the confirmation of his vassalage (*vasselage*); the reward for this service will be admittance to a heavenly community that is based upon such feudal ties, where the saint will reign eternally as a member of a company of warriors and followers of Christ (*celestien barnage*).

This episode clearly prefigures many of the subsequent events of the poem, articulating connections between reading, mimesis and community that are developed later on. Amphibel's reading of the crucifixion scene witnessed by Alban in his dream foreshadows both Alban's martyrdom and the acts of self-sacrifice that occur around it, including that of Amphibel himself. More importantly, Amphibel's interpretation also sets in motion a reading process that will subsequently recur in relation to these sacrifices, a hermeneutic that often establishes communities around such acts of martyrdom as forms of what I have termed sacrificial community. The connection suggested by Alban to Amphibel between interpretation, pedagogy and a mode of relationship based upon shared doctrinal belief is part of this process and might be read in terms of the project of the saint's life more generally. I will consider later on how, in interpreting or re-interpreting a series of interconnected sacrificial moments which refer back to the foundational sacrifice made by Christ, the poem itself performs an explanatory, tutorial function similar to that of Amphibel, thereby affirming connections between text and audience as well as articulating relationships to God and his spiritual entourage. Before doing so, I will first examine more closely how sacrifice, community and reading are interwoven in the intervening narrative.

3.3.1. Sacrificial Community, Epic Fraternity and Reading

Martyrdom and community are clearly associated in Alban's life, to the extent that martyrdom in the *Vie* is almost invariably represented as a community-based and a community-forming activity. The depiction of martyrdom in this text shares many features in common with the Life of Eustace, yet, in its emphasis of masculine acts of self-sacrifice and fraternal community, the *Vie de seint Auban* develops these features in significantly different ways. The events that follow Alban's martyrdom elaborate upon some of the implications of Amphibel's earlier reading of the saint's dream, making the collective and feudal dimensions of Alban's commitment to Christianity rather more

than simply a metaphor for the saint's relationship to God and Christian doctrine. The feudal nature of Alban's relationship to God is frequently underlined in relatively conventional terms both during and immediately after the saint's sacrifice. Examples of this include Alban suffering as a *leal chevaler* for his lord (Au, ll. 685—90) and receiving upon his death the handsome reward (*gueredun*) he has been promised in the form of heavenly fiefs/honours (*honur*) (Au, ll. 908—12). In addition, the saint's martyrdom also inspires another pagan knight – Heraclius (Aracle) – to convert and suffer death for his Christian faith, a death that develops the feudal connotations of Alban's martyrdom by describing the ascension of this second martyr in terms of his incorporation into Alban's celestial household or retinue (*mesnee*) (Au, ll. 1013—21).[27]

After Alban has been buried, these feudal references take on a more literal role which comes to have a bearing on the figuration of sacrificial community. One of the first manifestations of this kind of community occurs in the formation of a band of converts around a miracle that occurs at Alban's tomb. Once again, community and interpretation are here closely interwoven. Upon seeing Alban's tomb surrounded by a company of angels singing of his sacrifice and ascension to heaven, one of the pagans suggests that the crowd of shepherds and lookouts who have assembled to witness this miracle abandon their false gods and worship Christ. The visual and aural experiences of the crowd are thus channelled into a coherent interpretation and response formulated through a narrative that gives these experiences Christian meaning (a process similar to that examined in relation to the interpretation of the remains of Eustace and his family). The pagan spokesman's exhortation to the others to convert as he has done is based upon what is ostensibly ocular proof that both the angels and the four elements serve the saint, yet it also involves reading beyond this evidence to consider the sources of the saint's power. Against this background, the pagan speaker suggests a quest for the Christian preacher who has converted and tutored the saint, as he claims the truth and reliability of Amphibel's doctrine is clearly revealed in the fact that his disciple (*deciples*) has overcome torture and death (Au, ll. 1087—91). The pagan's suggestion that 'le sen au maistre prove li deciples' (Au, l. 1092) returns to issues raised in connection with Alban's dream, by foregrounding the relationship between conversion and the communication of doctrine through a process of revelation and interpretation that places the miraculous within the securing frame of the 'sen au maistre'. The link between miraculous experience, religious belief and Christian doctrine thus once again

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[27] On the use of feudal vocabulary as a feature peculiar to French vernacular saints' lives, see Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*, pp. 64—72.

appears as the product of interpretation; but, in this later episode, this link is made at one remove, through the hermeneutic discovery of a pedagogical relationship between the saint and his tutor that lies behind the miraculous event.

The outcome of the pagan's speech is the formation of a community of Christians that draws upon the feudal connotations of the relationships to God exemplified by Alban and Heraclius. The pagan audience, responding to this address in one voice,[28] announce their bond to one another and their allegiance to Christ at the same time:

> 'E nus dium autel, soium freres uni.
> Ne larrum pur pour ja de brant furbi
> Ke soium de s'amur desturnez ne flecchi.'
> (Au, ll. 1107—09)

This community of *freres uni* thus represents itself as a warrior band not unlike those found in *chansons de geste* of the same period: bonds between men are forged through union under a common cause and/or leader and both of these forms of allegiance are defended – if necessary – to the death.[29] Once again, the community is in a sense constituted through its articulation as such, using the first person plural; indeed, shared discourse such as this, using the pronoun *nus*, henceforth provides the predominant mode of address and response for this community.[30] What the univocal declaration cited above serves to highlight concerning this form of masculine community is its sacrificial foundations. Community here is grounded in a willingness to die for convictions that one shares with others, in a sacrificial impulse that anchors the community in that which its members possess both individually and communally: death.[31]

The sense in which this band of brothers with epic pretensions is a sacrificial community becomes clearer later on. Having been successful in their quest for Amphibel and having submitted themselves to him as students (as did Alban), the converted party are approached by soldiers sent by the pagan ruler of Verulamium, who has given instructions that the Christians be killed unless they agree to revert to their

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[28] The phrasing recalls some of the passages examined in connection with the *Vie de saint Eustache*: 'E cist communement respunent a un cri (etc.)' (Au, l. 1106). Cf. Ch. 3.2.2. above.
[29] Elliott notes the similarities between epic and accounts of martyrdom. This, indeed, is reflected in the work of medieval writers such as Thomas Cabham and Jean de Grouchy, whose descriptions of the *cantum gestualem* suggest close links between the lives of saints and those of military heroes. See *RTP*, pp. 182—213 and 'The Power of Discourse'; Suard, *La Chanson de geste*, pp. 7—9; Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*, p. 138; and *ANLB*, p. 243.
[30] See for instance, Matthew Paris, *Alban*, ed. by Harden, ll. 1234—36; even when speaking individually, the pronoun in the 1st person plural is preferred: for example, ll. 1315—25.
[31] Cf. my discussion of Derrida's theory of the gift of death and its relationship to questions of singularity in Ch. 1.3.

pagan faith. The converts predictably refuse the offers made to them by the soldiers and a battle ensues in which massacre on an epic scale is depicted as Christian martyrdom:

> Quant ço ouent Sarrazins, n'i out ke curucer.
> Lors sachent les espees sanz plus demurer,
> De parent u veisin sanz merci aver,
> Fiz, frere, nevu, d'ocire e detrencher,
> Ki oient une voiz pur eus recunforter:
> 'Venez, li mien ami, ki ai a soudeer;
> Saisiz ja en serrez cum loial chevaler.'
> Ço ouent Sarrazins, li glut adverser;
> Tant sunt il plus crueus e plus fier,
> [...]
> D'une part veissez les uns decoler,
> D'autre, esbueler, ocire e desmenbrer,
> Abatre e detrencher, as chevaus defuler.
> N'est hom ki n'en peust grant pitié aver.
> (Au, ll. 1326—34; 1340—43)

In this passage, hagiographic and epic motifs bleed into one another. What is being described is a battle that evokes the grandeur and pathos of similar scenes in epic narratives: the Saracen enemy in their cruelty and pride mercilessly slay a whole community of men who, the poem reminds us, are friends, kinsmen, sons, brothers and nephews to one another as well as (implicitly) to the families they have left behind. The model of fraternity exhibited in this section of the poem has much in common with the fraternities of epic narratives where both male community and the wider social networks that this community represents and defends are at stake in the conflict between pagan and Christian.[32] Moreover, in being sacrificed in this way, the fraternity confirms its commitment to God and to the cause for which it fights, as well as reinforcing the bonds internal to it, between 'loial chevaler'. In becoming a community of sacrificed knights, the fraternity closes in on itself, confirming its collective identity against the Saracen enemy and asserting this identity over and above any other form of kinship or community.

The idealised, often spiritualised, nature of epic *compagnie* is, furthermore, reflected and possibly amplified in this episode. The exhortation to fight that one finds on the lips of noble commanders in the battles of the *chanson de geste* is transformed into the divine encouragement that martyrs receive from God during their tortures. Great feats of arms are not, however, the intended result of such divine intervention. The men are told to expect great rewards (*soudeer*) for their loyalty, yet this is not an exhortation to fight but a promise of the kind of post-mortem promotion frequently

offered to Christian martyrs: as knights of Christ, this particular army is encouraged to sacrifice itself rather than fight back. Furthermore, the physical dismemberment associated with the tortures of martyrdom, as well as the response that these tortures are meant to evince, are echoed in the terrible injuries to which the Christian men submit. The mortified, penetrated, dismembered flesh of the converts is offered to the reader as a spectacle for contemplation, a spectacle by which – we are told – no man could fail to be moved to pity.[33]

Once again, what is at issue in this act of contemplation is a reading process that superimposes signifier and signified, event and meaning and, at the same time, inscribes a vicarious participation in what is extracted from such a reading. As I have argued, this hermeneutic is introduced in the interpretation of Alban's dream and to some extent informs the reading of the miracle that produces the community of Christian converts; in the episode in which the battle takes place, this type of response is presented through Amphibel, whose witness glosses the slaughter that the poem describes:

> Tut ço veit Amphibal ki plure e gent de quoer;
> Ne puet sanz martire les martirs regarder –
> Cist sunt martir de cors, cist de quor, duluser –
> Mes a Deu les presente, ki les deigne apeler,
> E cist s'en vunt eu ciel sanz fin demurer.
> (Au, ll. 1349—53)

Amphibel's reading of the martyrs is linked to an interpretation that places them in heaven, yet this process also inscribes a form of mimesis that implicates him in that to which he is witness and interpreter. Amphibel's reaction to the scenes he watches appears to be an unmediated emotional impulse that seemingly confirms the poem's suggestion that pity is the only human response to such events.[34] Nonetheless, this reaction clearly depends on viewing the slaughter as martyrdom (as well as massacre) and, therefore, in considering the dead as martyrs (as well as casualties of war). The effect of such an interpretation is a vicarious martyrdom conferred upon the reader (Amphibel), who partakes of this suffering by both contemplating the martyrs and

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[32] I draw this comparison with some qualification; as Simpson has indicated, epic community is often all too aware of its own ideological fragility, a weakness that its hagiographic correlatives do not seem to share: *Fantasy, Identity and Misrecognition*, pp. 15—88.
[33] This kind of comment, in which the reader/listener is encouraged to contemplate the extent of the tragedy being narrated is also sometimes a feature of the *chanson de geste*. On the use of dramatic presentation such as this in French saints' lives and epic, see Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*, pp. 72—116; and 120—22. See also Vitz, 'From the Oral to the Written', pp. 99—101.
[34] See Matthew Paris, *Alban*, ed. by Harden, l. 1343 (cited above).

weeping and lamenting their plight.[35] Amphibel is unable to see the martyrs without participating in their anguish; contemplation of their bodily pain (*martir de cors*) thus gives rise to an emotional pain located in the heart of the witness to their suffering (*martir de quor*). Amphibel's reading of the slaughtered converts as martyrs therefore performs its own version of the saints' suffering, a suffering located in the heart rather than the body and in the act of witness rather than in physical action or submission.[36]

In the case of Amphibel, the outcome of such contemplation is his own physical re-enactment of the martyrdom performed by this sacrificial community, a re-enactment that also recalls the sacrifice of Alban and the acts of interpretation and mimesis that this initial sacrifice inscribes. As is the case with most (if not all) Christian martyrs, Amphibel's martyrdom recalls and re-enacts the sufferings of Christ. Like Alban, Amphibel assumes his suffering both as a mimetic enterprise and also as the fulfilment of his feudal obligations towards a lord whose pain prefigures and exceeds his own, a king who takes this mortal suffering upon himself 'pur ses serfs sauver' (Au, l. 1615). As such, Amphibel's martyrdom is firmly situated in the tradition of sacrificial community developed throughout the poem, wherein the sacrificial nature of feudal bonds finds literal expression and development in Christian martyrdom.

As in the martyrdoms that occur earlier in the poem, that of Amphibel implicitly confirms the communal nature of the sacrifices that it recalls and mimetically reinscribes. Earlier in the poem, when informed of Alban's death by the converts that seek him out, Amphibel expresses a desire to join Alban's *cumpainnie* through martyrdom (Au, ll. 1220—29). This desire is realised upon Amphibel's death, when he receives a vision of Alban before being taken into the heavenly company to receive the reward for his tortures awarded to him by God. In this vision, Amphibel sees (*veir*) God surrounded by a great legion (*legiun*) of angels, with Jesus at his right hand, before eventually spotting 'Auban sun cumpainnun' (Au, l. 1708). Amphibel then addresses the saint directly, asking him to intervene on his behalf in order that he might overcome the *felun* who are attacking him and be taken into the country where he might enjoy eternal life (Au, ll. 1709—19). His prayer is answered: two angels are sent by God to

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[35] This response might be compared to the kinds of interpellation sometimes performed by epic narrative. Benton has suggested that the sense of a military brotherhood that could transcend lineage which one finds in the *Chanson de Roland* can be linked to what he describes as 'enculturation': a vicarious participation in the ideological values promoted by the poem that colours the world view of its (male, warrior) readers. Haidu has argued that the same poem represents the sacrifice of a particular kind of subjectivity embodied by Roland, thereby creating the conditions necessary for the formation of a community of political subjects subordinate to the State. This community is therefore implicitly established through the definition of one's own subjectivity within the ideological framework that the poem creates for its audience. Benton, 'Nostre Franceis n'unt talent de fuïr'; Haidu, *The Subject of Violence*, esp. pp. 186—210.

help 'son loial champiun' (Au, ll. 1720—24) and, shortly before his death, Amphibel hears a voice that tells him he will receive for his pains (*pur tun travail*) the same reward (*guerdun, dun*) as that given to his disciple Alban (Au, ll. 1725—28).

The feudal vocabulary used here is self-evident; it is, however, worth pointing out that this vocabulary again foregrounds the spiritualised form of feudal community or *compaignonnage* seen elsewhere in the text as well as underlining the spectacular support for such a community. Amphibel's self-sacrifice binds him as a *cumpainnun* to those Christians who have similarly died for their faith, making him both a member and a representative of sacrificial community. As suggested by Alban's comments prior to his conversion, the saint's performative assertion of his faith is depicted as a struggle against an enemy located outside the ideological and spiritual territory marked out by Christianity. The communal as well as the individual aspects of this pseudo-military struggle are expressed in the notion of the saint as champion, a champion who is furthermore aided by military reinforcements sent by God.

This evocation of the medieval tournament stresses both the military connotations of Amphibel's martyrdom and the element of combative spectacle that it involves. Yet, vision – or witness – is also presented as a crucial part of the sacrificial process in other ways: as well as seeing the company that he later hopes to join, Amphibel also asks to be seen and recognised by it. The saint announces his suffering as a preface to asking Alban to 'regardez moi ki sui en tel mortel prisun' (Au, l. 1710) and as evidence of a faith that implicitly demands reward. This recalls the earlier act of reading that Amphibel encourages Alban to perform in relation to his dream of Christ. This time, however, instead of seeing the crucifixion as a prefiguration of his own martyrdom, Alban is invited to contemplate his tutor's suffering as an endorsement of faith and thus, implicitly, to acknowledge retrospectively how this sacrifice continues the mimetic tradition to which Alban himself has contributed.

3.3.2. Hermeneutic Vision

Finally, I would like briefly to examine the act of witness with which the poem concludes and the relationship that this bears to reading and writing. The closing passages of the Life are, we are informed, the words of the pagan convert who experienced these events at first hand and wrote them down; this text was translated into Latin and then the Latin *Vita* was translated into its present form, *en rumantz* (Au, ll.

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[36] I have explored this elsewhere in relation to what (after Žižek) I term 'interpassive vision'. See Campbell, 'Sacrificial Spectacle'.

1811—12).[37] The translated testimony that ensues, although clearly asserting the privileged status of a first-hand account, nonetheless blurs the distinction between the unmediated experience of witness and that of reading:

> 'De ceste estoire vi le cumençail e fin
> Despuis ke Auban reçut en sun palois perrin
> Sun oste Amphibal, trespassant pelerin,
> Gesk'a tant k'il furent mis en sarcu marbrin;
> Of les paens estoie de la loi Apolin,
> Pallaide e Diene e Phebun e Jovin,
> Ki sunt dampné diable en enfer susterin;
> Mes le honur Jesu crest e cist vunt en declin.
> La geste ai, cum la vi, escrit en parchemin.
> Uncore vendra le jur, ben le di e devin,
> La estoire ert translatee en franceis e latin.
> [...]'
> (Au, ll. 1813—23)

The verification of the first-person account thus relies on an act of interpretation that sees what is ostensibly ocular experience through the lens of the text. This echoes the hermeneutics of vision discussed in connection with the *Vie de saint Eustache*, yet it also takes the elision of reading and experience a stage further. What the pagan claims he has 'seen' is not so much a series of events, as a narrative: the story (*estoire*) that the poem has just communicated to us implicitly provides the empirical basis for the pagan convert's experiences as well as being an outcome of those experiences. The pagan's account of the sequence of events he has witnessed reads like a summary or gloss, which at once re-views and retells the main events of the text. This merges the text and the events it describes through their relationship to a narrative sequence or *estoire*: the pagan's written account (and its translations) is commensurate with what he has seen.

In this context, the reference to the writing of the *geste* (as well as the life) of the saint(s) is significant. Although saints' lives were sometimes described as *chansons de geste* (or *cantus gestualis*),[38] the term as it is used here also clearly evokes epic poetry. As well as once again aligning the deeds of the saints with those of epic warriors, this reference refers the reader back to the scene of the battle, where Amphibel watched the martyrdom of the Christian fraternity that came to find him. The act of narrative witness performed by the pagan convert who writes the story is thus implicitly linked to that of Amphibel, and the act of writing itself becomes a vicarious re-enactment and reinscription of the act of martyrdom.

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[37] McCulloch notes that, although not deviating from his Latin source, Matthew Paris substantially elaborates the role of the eyewitness in the epilogue. 'Saints Alban and Amphibalus', pp. 776—7.
[38] Jean de Grouchy (writing around 1300) understood the term *cantus gestualis* to include both epic and hagiographic poetry. *ANLB*, p. 243; Suard, *La Chanson de geste*, pp. 7—9; Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*, p. 138.

The outcome of this act of writing (which is also an act of interpretation) is therefore another mimetic response inspired by the events of the poem. The pagan claims that, having written his book, he will now undertake a pilgrimage to Rome to spread the word, subjecting himself to penitential hardship and deprivation along the way. This pilgrimage brings the text full-circle, recalling the errant preaching of Amphibel with which the text begins, yet it also introduces an important textual element that echoes Stock's claims concerning the textual bases of community. The pagan claims that, in addition to telling the Romans what he has seen and heard (*kancke ai veu e oi*), he will show them his fine book (*musterai i mun livre escrit en veeslin*) (Au, ll. 1835—40). In a similar fashion to Alban, non-believers will thus be 'shown' the truth of the Christian faith, but this demonstration will focus not on a divinely communicated vision but on the textual object. The interpretative foundation for understanding Christian doctrine exemplified by Amphibel's reading of Alban's dream implicitly still holds; however, the basis for clerical exegesis such as this – indeed, for divine revelation itself – is now the text and the supposedly authentic experience of Christian truth that it might yield.

3.4. *Getting Medieval*

In my readings of the Lives of Eustace and Alban I have tried to show how community is not simply used as a predicate or foundation for the text but also in an important sense emerges from it, as the ultimate – but inevitably deferred and incomplete – consummation of the text's ideological project. Community is thus often incorporated into the text as part of a representational ethos that attempts to reproduce and consolidate for the reader or listener a sense of participation in a collective body united in faith, a sense that is arrived at by textually-mediated identifications of various kinds.

I will now consider how such identifications might be thought about in terms of modern reading practices and, more specifically, in relation to the forms of community that could emerge from such reading practices. In so doing, I would like to consider the recent work of Carolyn Dinshaw, whose book, *Getting Medieval*, endeavours to theorise community as part of the relationship between the medieval past and the postmodern present. Dinshaw construes the postmodern relationship to the past – to the medieval past in particular – in terms of queer community: a community formed in relation to sex as a heterogeneous and indeterminate category as opposed to a category that is fixed or knowable. This, claims Dinshaw, responds to a 'queer historical impulse' inclined toward the making of connections across time between, on the one hand, that which is

excluded by the sexual categories of the past and, on the other hand, that which is left out of sexual categories in the present. These connections are made through affirming a relationship to discourses, people, places and things in the past in their indeterminacy.[39] Community is thus based on partial connection with an indeterminate past; it is reliant upon an engagement with and between differences that are imperfectly connected through shared marginality, queer position and abjected space.

Dinshaw describes this partial connection between the present and the past in terms of a physical, affective and (implicitly) hermeneutic relationship that she terms 'the touch'. Although this 'touching' relies upon a contact with the past that is mediated by texts, Dinshaw suggests that it is experienced physically, as a kind of vibration across time. What touching the past in this way achieves is, firstly, the breaking down of notions of identity and subjectivity as these are construed in personal or historical terms and, secondly, the forging of identities within the context of a 'postidentitarian and postmedieval ethos and history'.[40] Community thus resides in the inherent instability of sexual identity as this manifests itself, firstly, in one's association with abnormal or marginal forms of sexuality in the present and, secondly, in the disruptions of sexual identity provoked by one's contact with – or touching of – the indeterminacy of medieval sexualities. Yet community is also what emerges from the embracing of such sexual (and historical) indeterminacy, an embrace that Dinshaw claims 'extends the resources for self- and community building into even the distant past'.[42]

Dinshaw's attempt to examine the relationships forged between past and present in the framework of a queer model of community is, I think, one that deserves to be taken seriously. Her work invites reflection on what might be at stake in the negotiation with the medieval past and its potential for troubling the way that both singular and collective identities are created or defined in the present. Yet there are a number of issues raised by her use of notions of queerness and community that require further, more detailed consideration. I would suggest that these issues largely depend on the nature of the relationship to the past that Dinshaw outlines, and, more specifically, to the role of language or texts in negotiating such a relationship. For, as I will argue, in

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[39] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 11.
[40] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 192.
[42] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 1. This metaphor of construction recurs in Dinshaw's claim that 'such a concept of queer histories – affective relations across time – recognizes the historical past as a vibrant and heterogeneous source of self-fashioning as well as community building' (p. 142); and in her conclusion, where she speaks of 'our efforts to build selves and communities now and into the future' (p. 206).

undervaluing the significance of textuality or language, Dinshaw's work potentially overlooks one of the most important resources for the kind of queer community she claims to promote.

Dinshaw's model of partial connection between queers past and present deliberately confuses the linguistic and the affective, the textual and the physical in describing the experience of the touch. This, indeed, is one of the more interesting aspects of the argument made in *Getting Medieval*, an aspect that resonates with the hagiographic hermeneutics explored in earlier sections. However, the textual-affective nature of this contact is never explicitly developed in relation to the constitution of the queer subject or object of the touch. The queer bodies with which Dinshaw claims partially to connect in her book always to some extent escape linguistic categories by confounding the power of these categories to describe or fix an object of knowledge. The queer therefore troubles the linguistic framework that attempts to render it intelligible, yet this troubling is not in any important sense constitutive of queerness but rather an effect of the inherent instability that prevents the queer body from being contained or described by language.

Thus, in her discussion of John/Eleanor Rykener, Dinshaw considers the linguistic and rhetorical issues surrounding the court case brought against a fourteenth-century male transvestite, who posed as a female prostitute for male clients in London.[43] The focus for this discussion is the confusion of the categories of knowledge conventionally used to mark sexual and gender boundaries; the transvestite prostitute renders these categories permeable and unfixed by virtue of the fact that his/her gender and sexuality are always overdetermined. The language of the legal documents reflects the indeterminacy of the body and its sexuality here, it attempts to render the body fixed and knowable while gesturing towards the unspeakable and the queer in spite of itself. This model is, Dinshaw suggests, more widely applicable to medieval engagements with the queer: just as the John/Eleanor Rykener text reveals 'how heterosexually based categories are confused by, inadequate to, and contaminated by the queer', so Chaucerian narrative 'allows us to see how a "felaweshipe" formed on such categories encounters and both deals with and is incapable of dealing with the queer'.[44]

This analysis is doubtless right up to a point, yet might it not also be true that queer bodies are generated by the linguistic confusion that renders them at once (un)intelligible and troubling? A useful counterpoint to Dinshaw's argument in this

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[43] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, pp. 100—12.
[44] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, p. 113.

respect would be Judith Butler's claim in *Bodies That Matter* that discourse is that which materialises the subject; the body therefore has no ontological status fully independent of this discursive materialisation. Moreover, Butler suggests that because the materiality of the sexed body is constituted through a citational engagement with discourse, discourse is therefore able to disrupt as well as to confirm the supposed materiality of sex and gender.[45] In assuming that the queer is somehow prior to language, that it is always necessarily beyond or elsewhere, Dinshaw thus fails to consider how linguistic indeterminacy might create queer objects and – by extension – how it might engender queer identifications and desires with medieval as well as postmodern resonance.[46] This ability to touch the queer is, it would seem, the prerogative of the present: medieval discourse can only generate such touches against its own, better and inescapably heteronormative judgement.

By contrast, what I think Dinshaw's analyses gesture towards is a consideration of the queer body as an indeterminate signifier that does not necessarily pre-exist its being-in-language. What is queer about the body is neither the body nor the sexual activities in which it indulges but rather the discourse that is woven around both. As my reading of different versions of the Life of Mary the Egyptian will demonstrate, the body's alienation from itself through a being-in-language that both is and is not the body is always in some sense potentially queer: it enables identifications and desires that refer to but which are nonetheless detached from the physical and sexual body. This discourse does not therefore simply facilitate communication between a subject and object that imperfectly resemble one another through their shared 'queer positionality'. The discourse that can form queer objects also potentially creates queer subjects insofar as it makes possible (although not inevitable) a queer subject position that can be appropriated and inhabited beyond the text.

This leads to a further point concerning Dinshaw's notion of community. For if Dinshaw argues for a community based upon touches and partial connections across time, this community is never clearly distinguished from the communities and subjectivities that use this process of touching as raw material for identities of their own. This is perhaps deliberate on Dinshaw's part: the point of 'getting medieval' is, as she makes clear, to redefine identity in the here and now. Yet Dinshaw's engagement with indeterminacy, specificity and difference in the examples that she cites is often elided by the marginalising of the historical queer either in order to confirm identity in

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[45] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, esp. pp. 1—23.
[46] Mills argues persuasively for precisely such an approach to medieval religious iconography: 'Ecce Homo' and (more obliquely) "Whatever You Do is a Delight to Me!".

the present or to use the queer figure as a source of an alternative kind of authority.[47] This is not to say that this mode of reading has no place in the kind of queer history that Dinshaw promotes: this is very far from being the case. However, there is a slippage here between queer potentiality and queer identity that needs to be explored further in that each would give rise to a different form of queer community. I would argue that for the purposes of thinking community in terms of queer reading – and specifically in terms of Dinshaw's concept of indeterminacy and dislocation – the self- and community building she describes need to be separated from a notion of community based on the touch. That is, the identities that are formed or re-formed as a result of an engagement with the indeterminacy of the past are to be distinguished from the community that can be thought of as prior to any identity, a community that might be thought of *purely in terms of the touch*.[48] The point of this would therefore be to make the touch constitutive of community, not simply a step towards the formation of an identity that would limit or neutralise the troubling indeterminacy of this kind of queer engagement.

The reasons for this can be clarified by considering some of the most recent work on community by thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy. These thinkers have argued for notions of community based on potentiality, impossibility and difference that in some ways conform to Dinshaw's model of community but that nonetheless point to some of the problems with it. I mention these thinkers not because they provide an *alternative* to queer community but rather because their thinking on community can, I think, be harnessed in the service of a theorisation of a community such as that Dinshaw describes. Nancy and Agamben, for example, theorise communities that exist in negative relationship to community as an identitarian fiction. For Nancy, the plenitude of community communicated by mythical discourse must be interrupted in order to reveal (and thereby establish) a *communauté désœuvrée*: a community based not on resemblance and identity but founded instead on the co-presentation (*comparution*) of singularity and difference.[49] In Agamben's case, community is based on (human) potentiality, on a form-of-life irreducible either to identity or to what Agamben would term 'bare life': the life that exists in a zone of indistinction in which the law is at once suspended and established,

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[47] This seems to be the case in Dinshaw's reading of Margery Kempe. See *Getting Medieval*, pp. 143—82.
[48] One might compare Butler's contention that 'if the term "queer" is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes'. *Bodies That Matter*, p. 228.
[49] Nancy, *La Communauté désœuvrée*.

in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide or performing a sacrifice.[50] This potential or 'coming' community is, Agamben suggests, opposed to the sovereign power of the State in that the production of bare life on the one hand and identity on the other always serves the interests of such a power.

In the case of each of these thinkers, then, community is a form of being-in-common that refuses resemblance and identity and which thus *emerges in or as that refusal*. For Nancy, identity is an immanentist fiction to be overcome through the realisation of its impossibility on both individual and collective levels. The community emerges at the limit of being and its emergence is founded on an exposure to the irreducibility of singularity that makes both communal identity and individual identity impossible in their absolute forms. The *communauté désœuvrée* articulates the impossibility of absolute immanence in both its collective and individual conceptualisations by asserting itself as a collection of singularities. The fantasy of pure collective totality that underpins conventional notions of community is thus refused along with its mirror image: the idea of the individual as that which is radically and irreducibly detached from others.[51] Community – which is therefore reliant neither on an illusory identification with others, nor on the fantasy of radical alterity that moulds the figure of the individual – is instead thought of in terms of singularity: a form of being that is at once singular and plural, that – although remaining specific – is always already inclined toward others and that only appears through a communication to others of that which separates them.[52]

For Agamben, to focus on identity would similarly mean alienating the community from itself. Like Nancy, Agamben argues for a community based on the embracing of singularity as a form of being which is most proper to the subject, a form of being which signals not individual identity but instead implies a commonality of form that does not depend on any particular content. Singularity thus implies a commonality withdrawn from the shared particularities that would make up either individual or collective identity:

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[50] Agamben, *The Coming Community*. The notion of bare life is outlined more extensively by Agamben in *Homo Sacer*, where he speaks of it in terms of sovereign power. Bare life is here thought of as a form of life that is included in the law in the form of its suspension: that is contained in the law through an inclusion that is also an exclusion. (This is the same principle as the exception proving the rule: the exception 'proves' the rule by suspending the rule and confirming it in the form of its suspension, thus being both abandoned by the rule and incorporated into it.) In much the same way, Agamben suggests, the juridical order holds at its borders a form of life that suspends and confirms it.

[51] Nancy, *La Communauté désœuvrée*, p. 16.

[52] Nancy develops this idea elsewhere in *L'Expérience de la liberté*, *Le Sens du monde*, and – more extensively – in *Être singulier pluriel*.

> Because if instead of continuing to search for a proper identity in the already improper and senseless form of individuality, humans were to succeed in belonging to this impropriety as such, in making of the proper being-thus not an identity and an individual property but a singularity without identity, a common and absolutely exposed singularity – if humans could, that is, not be-thus in this or that particular biography, but be only *the* thus, their singular exteriority and their face, then they would for the first time enter into a community without presuppositions and without subjects, into a communication without the incommunicable.[53]

Being the 'thus' according to Agamben therefore involves an experience of singularity not as participation in a concept or property but rather as an exposure to the threshold where being is both proper to the subject and common to all. Agamben describes this in terms of bordering: an experience of being within an outside that marks the point at which singularity becomes pure exteriority, becomes pure exposure to its own outside. Moreover, Agamben suggests that this experience of being is essentially linguistic.[54] This is partly because being-in-language is a form of being that is always beside itself: linguistic being exists on the threshold between inside and out, marking a point of indifference between what is proper and improper to the subject.[55]

When placed in the context of the work of Agamben and Nancy, Dinshaw's thinking on queer community might therefore come more clearly into focus. For if, as Agamben and Nancy argue, it is possible to conceptualise community as both fundamentally non-identitarian and as a form of being-in-language, queer community might also be thought of in similar terms. The idea of a community based upon sexual indeterminacy would depart somewhat from the communities theorised by either Agamben or Nancy insofar as queer community would not therefore be a purely formal collectivity based upon human singularity. Nevertheless, sexuality (as that which determines the community) would come closer to what Agamben might describe as an idea than it would approximate a concept: what would matter would be the being-in-language of sexuality in its indeterminacy.[56]

This would, of course, involve thinking of queerness as potential as well as marginal, as a phenomenon that is based not only on content or particularity but also on form. Yet this notion of queerness is possibly a more critically enabling means of

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[53] Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p. 65.
[54] One might compare Nancy's claim that the being-in-common of the *communauté désœuvrée* is literary in the sense that it emerges in the literary interruption of myth. This interruption is constitutive of nothing but the non-identity of community with itself, the non-identity of each singular being both with him-/her-self and with others and, ultimately, the non-identity of literature with itself, insofar as the text interrupts itself and its own story. *La Communauté désœuvrée*, p. 164.
[55] Agamben, *The Coming Community*, pp. 71—77. Cf. his discussion of commonly experienced being-into-language as pure mediality (or a means without an end): *Means Without End*, esp. pp. 3—12; 109—18.
[56] Cf. Brown's claim that sexuality was something that everyone shared in Christian communities composed of men and women from widely different backgrounds. The renunciation of the body thus provides a fundamental support for Christian universality. P. Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. 61.

approaching the queer in medieval texts, a means which is indeed already well-established in some areas of queer studies. This line of approach avoids thinking of queerness as necessarily related to non-normative forms of identity and facilitates forms of queer reading that emphasise the priority of queer phenomena to identity *per se* (as that which is most fundamentally normative). In relation to work such as my own, therefore, this notion of queerness would promote readings that do not necessarily concern themselves with what might be described as the medieval epistemology of the closet, that is, with the ways that the queer is depicted (and often vilified) in medieval discourse, often for the purposes of shoring up heteronormative hegemony. Rather, in addition to this kind of reading, queerness might be located in any text where sexuality and identity are at issue; religious literature being just one, particularly engaging example of how the orthodox might produce and nurture the queer.

This model of queerness would therefore exhibit precisely the kind of indeterminacy and disruptive potential that Dinshaw describes. Yet, in relation to community, *this indeterminacy itself* (as opposed to any subsequent appropriation) could constitute the essence of queer community as a form of being together that may remain unactualised and undetermined. This would not preclude the kinds of identity formation (or re-formation) that Dinshaw encourages in the readership she addresses in *Getting Medieval*, but it would allow the conceptualisation of queer community as permanently unfixed, as never established except as the embrace of sexual indeterminacy as such. Moreover, community thus conceptualised would potentially include the medieval as well as the modern (or postmodern) readers who respond to the queer possibilities uncovered by the text. It should not be assumed that medieval responses to the troubling potential of the queer in contemporary cultural contexts were always necessarily credulous and uncritical, just as the incredulity and enlightenment of postmodern approaches cannot be taken for granted. Establishing imperfect connections between queer readings such as these – however hypothetical – and later, non-medieval responses to the queer could only really be possible in a community of the touch such as that I have outlined.

The reason why saints' lives lend themselves to queer readings of this sort is because, as seen in Sections 3.1.—3.3., they provide a framework for communal identification that is never actualised within the text itself. Community is always potential insofar as reading communities must insert themselves into a virtual role provided by the hagiographic text. One of the most common examples of this would be the closing address to the audience and exhortation to prayer, where, as I have

mentioned, the use of the pronoun *nus* serves an interpellative function in encouraging the audience to identify with the Christian community that the 'we' encompasses and makes available for appropriation. This is similarly the case for the depiction of mass conversion and worship in accounts of martyrdom, where the community represented within the text is often used as a means of communicating a response to the saint with which the audience outside the text can identify. The narrative composition of such communities in saints' lives therefore suggests a structure that itself invites queer desires and identifications.

Moreover, the layering of communities within and outside the hagiographic text creates a chain of desire that always potentially confuses its object. The Christian subject's desire for God is inevitably mediated and displaced, becoming equivalent (and perhaps queerly subordinate to) desire for the saint and/or the various communities of Christian worshipers depicted within the text. The troubling possibilities of this will, I hope, become clearer in my reading of different versions of the *Vie de Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne*, where the queer potential of language and textuality can be seen to underwrite the kinds of textual community that I examined earlier in this chapter. However, I would like to emphasise that this kind of queer confusion can also be seen elsewhere in hagiography as part of a narrative process that builds textual communities on forms of interpretation that simultaneously defer and attempt to approach a common object.

3.5. Mary the Egyptian

The legend of Mary the Egyptian enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages. In the French vernacular alone, there are at least fourteen different versions of the saint's life in existence, the most famous of which (at least in modern academic circles) is that composed by Rutebeuf c. 1262. According to Peter F. Dembowski, the medieval legendary tradition as it exists in French divides into two separate branches: in the first, Mary is the protagonist; in the second (which follows the Latin versions of the earliest Greek Life more closely), Zozimas takes centre stage.[57] These two branches are referred to as *T* and *O* respectively. As Dembowski points out, Rutebeuf's poem (*R*) is something of an exception to this rule in that it incorporates elements of both traditions;

[57] *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski, pp. 13—24. On the adaptation of the legend in the 12th and 13th centuries, see also, Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 106—23.

the poem nonetheless owes considerably more to *T* than it does to *O* and can thus be seen as a development of the former tradition.[58]

My discussion will focus primarily on versions of the legend belonging to the *T* tradition which, as I will argue, often concern themselves with questions of narrative mediation and its relationship to community. Two aspects of the *T* version will be given particular attention: firstly, the connection between the saint and community (particularly male community) and, secondly, the role of narrative in ultimately defining this connection. Although the treatment of such issues may be coloured in places by the engagement with romance traditions in this branch of the legend, I do not claim that the elements I will be considering here are unique to *T*.[59] I would nonetheless argue that the fact that Mary plays a larger part in texts of the *T* branch tends to foreground issues of authority and narrative transmission, as well as the gender-related questions that such issues inevitably raise. Consideration of Rutebeuf's poem will allow some of these questions to be developed in relation to other factors such as male (and especially authorial) identification with the saint.

3.5.1. The *T* Version

In the *T* version, Mary's relationship to community or, more precisely, to Christian society is manifestly at issue from the very beginning of the poem, expressing itself most obviously through the relationships she has with men. As a young woman, Mary's sinful lack of self-control in matters of sexual conduct is clearly a social problem. Having run away from home in order to pursue a career as a prostitute, Mary attracts most of the young men of Alexandria, who – to her obvious delight – regularly fight and kill one another over her outside her door (ME, ll. 129—44).[60] Moreover, her dissolute behaviour begins to affect the town and surrounding areas, which, the poem informs us, languish in a state of sickness and perdition on her account (ME, ll. 153—56). The threat that she poses to Christian society becomes more obvious when, having left Alexandria for Jerusalem, Mary manages to sleep with all the pilgrims on the boat. Paying no attention to whether the men she seduces are married or single, Mary, we are told, 'tant fust cointes de sen mestier | ke tos les fist o soi pekier' (ME, ll. 305—6). As similarly evinced by her endless stream of lovers in Alexandria, this *mestier* thus not

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[58] For a more detailed discussion of Rutebeuf's use of *T* and *O* see Faral and Bastin, *Œuvres complètes*, II, pp. 9—19 (under Rutebeuf). Cf. *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Baker.

[59] On *T*'s relationship to hagiographic romance see Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 213—20; Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 107—9 and 'Authority and Anonymity'; Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, pp. 31—5; and Swanburg, 'Oraisons and Liaisons'. On romance influence on the legend more generally, see *RTP*, pp. 67—76.

[60] All references to this version of the poem are to *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski (*T* on pp. 25—111).

only sows discord among the men that she ensnares but also – as the 'tos [...] o soi' implies – establishes an antithetical form of community. The circulation of Mary's body among the men she seduces creates a complicity among them wherein the prostitute inveigles others into sharing her unashamedly pleasurable participation in sin. Mary's relationship to men in the early stages of the poem is thus a source of conflict, chaos, and spiritual contamination, a contamination that has widespread spiritual ramifications for the social network with which Mary has contact. Yet by acting as the source for an alternative community – a community united through sinful participation in sexual activity – her *mestier* as a prostitute also poses a more direct threat to the very notion of community, especially in its Christian form.

The depiction of the meretricious and sinful woman draws upon a relatively standard set of tropes found in contemporary misogynist writings. Mary, like other women belonging to the nebulous and conveniently indiscriminate category of *fames* in anti-feminist discourse, is characterised as a source of corruption and dissent; she is, to quote one of the most widely copied *dits* on the subject of women, 'achesun de tuz maus': a woman who incites mortal hatred between men, thereby destroying bonds of friendship, fraternity and filiation.[61] Furthermore, this corruption of masculine bonds is linked to her wantonly lustful and intemperate behaviour, associating Mary with the consuming (sexual) voracity so often considered typical of her sex.[62]

What is more unusual about the portrayal of Mary's life leading up to her conversion is the parallels it invites with the early spiritual careers of saints like Alexis or Euphrosine; indeed, it is perhaps no accident that a version of *T* is included alongside the Lives of both of these saints in Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici Miscellaneous 74: a manuscript collection that will be examined in the next chapter.[63] Mary's early life ironically reflects the saint's rejection of family and society in a number of ways. The saint's belief in her youth is a simulacrum of the absolute belief in God defended by saints such as Alexis. Mary, we are informed, 'se fioit tant en sa jovente | que tout fesoit

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[61] I refer here to *Le Blasme des fames*, a misogynist text that appears in more manuscripts than any other extant *dit* on the subject of women (8 mss in total). In a recent edition of the poem, the editors date the text to around the late 13th century. An earlier example of a piece of writing strikingly similar to the *Blasme* in the criticisms it makes of women can be found in Marbod of Rennes's 'De Meretrice': ch. 3 of his *Liber decem capitulorum*. See *Three Medieval Views of Women*, ed. by Fiero *et al.*, pp. 12—16; 119—42 (I paraphrase/cite ll. 39—44). See also Marbod of Rennes, *Liber decem capitulorum*.

[62] Compare, for example, the assertion that 'femme est enfer qe tut receit | tut tens ad seif e tut tens beit' (*Blasme*, ll. 95—96, in *Three Medieval Views of Women*, ed. by Fiero *et al.*). Similar sentiments inform many high and late medieval discourses on women from sermons through to satirical or courtly literature: the traditional representation of the wanton widow (which links texts by authors as diverse as Ovid, St Paul, Jean de Meun and Gautier le Leu) would be one example of the medieval development of this motif.

[63] The version of the Life in question is designated by Dembowski as *B*. See my discussion of the manuscript in Ch. 4.2.

le sien plaisir' (ME, ll. 66—7) her faith – implied by the use of the verb *se fier* – is thus at least as preoccupying as that of other saints, with one crucial difference: Mary's faith does not cite God as its object but rather a physical, implicitly impermanent physical state. Furthermore, like the saint, this 'faith' leads Mary to reject the rich husband that her parents offer her, to defy her parents' appeals and to run away from home to live in Alexandria for seventeen years (a number with Christic significance also used to describe the periods Alexis spends in exile and under his parents' staircase). Having fled to another country to pursue her meretricious vocation, the saint then immerses herself in *luxure* to such an extent that wise old men reflecting on this debauched treatment of her body are led to exclaim, 'com mar fu onc ceste dolante, | tant fait a plaindre se jovente!' (ME, ll. 207—8): a comment that recalls responses to the abuses of the body often described in accounts of martyrdom.[64]

Mary is thus a liminal figure even before her exile in the desert, a liminality that ironically invokes that of the saint.[65] Instead of being the result of religious vocation, Mary's exclusion from social networks is the result of her pursuit of a sinful sexual career that makes her a sinner on a superhuman scale.[66] As this would suggest, her body and the uses to which it is put are therefore at the heart of the problematic relationship that she maintains with a broader society, yet the polluting influence of her sexually overdetermined body is not simply a social issue. What the opening sections of the poem suggest through their narration of Mary's early life is that the contaminating effects of her sin have both social and narrative effects, extending to the corruption of the narrative conventions of the saint's life itself.

Mary's exile of course removes her from all contact with the society to which she seems so disastrously attached and helps her to steer a course that is more suited to the saint she eventually becomes.[67] The corporeal change that Mary undergoes during her penitential exile in the desert represents her spiritual transformation in physical terms, articulating the shift from an externally attractive but inwardly sinful state to one characterised by physical ugliness and internal purity. However, the emphasis of Mary's body is also remarkable for other reasons: as I will argue, the outcome of Mary's exile –

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[64] This suggests a playfully ironic treatment of what Elliott describes as the 'gradational structure' of saints' *vitae* (as opposed to the *passiones*), which rely on a fluid scale of values that moves from good, to better, to best. See her discussion of the legend of Mary of Egypt: *RTP*, pp. 66—76.
[65] Cf. my discussion of the liminality of the saint in Ch. 2.3.1. and 2.3.2.
[66] Cazelles has suggested that this superhuman sinfulness makes Mary an 'anti-sainte': an antithetical figure with symbolic value, as opposed to a model with whom the average sinner might identify. See 'Modèle ou mirage'.
[67] On travel and purification in the *Vie*, see Johnson and Cazelles, *Le Vain Siècle*, pp. 98—103. See also Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, p. 33.

the way that it transforms not only her body but also its relationship to a wider society – relies on a particular relationship between body and text. The dangerously seductive female body with which Mary begins the poem is gradually elided not only by its mortification in the desert, but also by the various appropriations of that body through the narrative of her life, appropriations that eventually replace the female sexual body with a feminine signifier. This relationship between body and text sometimes recalls the way the bodies of certain saints are associated with texts as both physical and metaphorical objects, recalling, for example, the written scroll discovered with Alexis's body beneath the staircase. However, in Mary's case, the association between body and text (in the broad sense) is often physically overdetermined, suggesting a relationship between narration and access to the body that implicitly recalls and inverts her former, less beneficial connection to (male) society. This has ramifications for questions of gender and the body that can be further developed in relation to the notion of community in the poem: whereas the circulation of the female body implicitly disrupts masculine community, the feminine signifier to which that body is reduced at the end of Mary's Life instead reinforces and confirms it.[68]

The way this relationship appears in the poem is conditioned by the narrative structure of Mary's Life, which is relatively complex in the *T* version.[69] In addition to the description of her life related to readers or listeners at the beginning of the vernacular text, there are at least two other significant accounts of the saint's story: that told by Mary and that finally communicated by Zozimas. Mary's account most often appears as a form of explanatory confession, in which she relates her life and sins to Zozimas as justification of the lengths to which she has gone to repent. The confessional quality of this narrative is explicitly mentioned in all but one of the extant versions of the *T* branch that describe this event, the most common formulation being Zozimas's request that Mary tell him her life *par confession*.[70] As *T* makes clear, the confessional quality of Mary's narrative indicates its inaccessibility as a public discourse and implies

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[68] On the relationship between Mary's body and male community in *T* see Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 213—21. (Cf. Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, pp. 51—3.) On the Old English Life, see Scheil, who argues that the opposition between Mary and Zozimas, female sexual body and male ascetic body is a hermeneutic strategy to explore the meaning of monastic masculinity: 'Bodies and Boundaries'. On the place of Mary's body as a figure in the relationship between seeing and knowing in Ælfric's text, see Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, pp. 132—51.

[69] In *O*, there is no account of Mary's early life. As in *T*, the saint narrates her life to Zozimas, who relates the story to his fellow brothers after Mary's death; the Life is also written down in the *O* version, a detail not included in *T*. Because of the difference in structure between the two poems, the narration of Mary's life within the poem itself is more complex in *T* than in *O*.

[70] See *T*: ll. 1009—12. Zozimas also asks for Mary's confession in *X*: str. 49. In *V*: str. 21, although Zozimas does not ask for Mary's confession, her account of her sins is nonetheless seen as such ('Quant elle li eut tous ses pechiés confessé [...]'). *N* (ll. 284—300) makes no mention of confession; Mary's story (*sun cunte*) is contrasted with Zozimas's preaching. *W* is incomplete and does not mention this episode of the Life.

a form of private exposure reflected in the saint's use of language in her response to Zozimas's entreaty:

> 'Dame', dist il, 'saintime feme,
> Dont es tu nee et de quel regne?
> Descoevre me tote te vie,
> Por Dieu nel me celer tu mie.
> Di le moi par confession,
> Que Diex te face voir pardon.'
> 'Sire', che li respont Marie,
> 'Je ne le te celerai mie,
> Quant tu nue m'as esgardee,
> Ja me vie ne t'iert celee.
> Trestoute le te conterai
> Si que ja rien n'en celerai.'
> (ME, ll. 1007—18)

What is striking about Mary's response is the connection it draws between seeing her naked body and hearing the details of her life of sin: to be physically uncovered is, she suggests, on a par with being exposed through the confession of her sins.[71] On one level, this suggests that both forms of nakedness are equally shameful for Mary in her present state, yet it is clearly more than just that. Her analogy appears in an exchange that is littered with verbs of discovery and revelation (*descoevre*, *nel celer mie*), verbs that refer explicitly to the story of her life that she is about to tell. Mary's confession, even without reference to her nakedness, features as a kind of narrative striptease in which she again exposes herself – this time in a more intimate, narrative sense – to Zozimas's fascinated gaze and, this time, promises to go all the way. Thus, while this episode clearly rewrites the relationship between the naked female body and the male onlooker (and/or participant) with which Mary has formerly been associated, it also remains residually attached to the titillation that this relationship was originally designed to produce.

As I have just mentioned, the fact that this is a confessional, 'private' account nonetheless changes the dynamics of such a relationship: Mary's self-exposure is not unrestricted, as was previously the case, but is directed instead at a male individual. After telling Zozimas her life story, Mary makes clear that her narrative, like her wasted body, is to be kept hidden from a wider public:

> 'Zosimas', ce respont Marie,
> 'Ains t'en iras en t'abeïe,
> Mais ne te caut dire me vie
> Entre que je soie fenie.
> Se Dex m'a a toi demoustree,

[71] Cf. Lees and Overing's discussion of sight and revelation in Ælfric's version: *Double Agents*, pp. 144—48.

Par toi volrai estre celee.
[...]'
(ME, ll. 1041—46)

Thus, if Mary has been revealed to Zozimas by God (and, implicitly, by the recounting of her life), this revelation must be concealed behind the silence to which Zozimas is sworn until the saint's death. What this suggests in an inverse sense, however, is that the posthumous telling of the saint's life will perform precisely the revelation that is forbidden during her lifetime. Furthermore, this revelation will not only be an exposure of a truth indicated by God, but also a narratively mediated experience equivalent to Zozimas's intimacy with the saint, an intimacy that in being communicated through the telling of Mary's life, is nonetheless always at one remove from it.

This slippage between the physical and the textual is seemingly confirmed by Mary's death. In his final encounter with the saint, Zozimas is shown (*mostrer*) Mary's dead body by God and then proceeds to inspect the almost totally naked corpse before covering it with a piece of his clothing (ME, ll. 1368—82). The monk then discovers a divine missive by Mary's head, asking him to take 'le cors Marie' and bury it with all due ceremony (ME, ll. 1387—90). The primary significance of this episode is not the miraculous appearance of the letter, however, but the name that it contains. Zozimas learns Mary's name *after* her death, through the note that God leaves with her body: just as Mary's body is hidden beneath the ground, her name is thus finally revealed. What this shift from the body to the noun suggests is a form of symbolic substitution wherein Mary's name serves to evoke the absence of her physical being even as it allows the posthumous identification of that being – naming, immortalising and absenting the body through divinely communicated text. 'Le cors Marie' thus becomes simply 'Marie'; the female body disappears as part of a divine injunction that replaces it with the text that communicates her name.

The final retelling of Mary's life in the vernacular text is, appropriately, its first public narration. Upon returning to the monastery and to his monastic brothers, Zozimas gathers them all together in their *capitre communel* and tells them the whole story:

Zosimas conmence a parler,
Il ne se volra mais celer.
De l'Egyptiene Marie
Lor raconte toute le vie
(ME, ll. 1501—4)

What Zozimas is thus able to 'show' or 'uncover' is the saint's name and life. Indeed, it is worth noting that, unlike most other saints' lives, no attempt is made to account for

the whereabouts of the remains of Mary's body or to describe the elevation of the corpse. Mary's redefined relationship to the social world is one that involves the confirmation of male community rather than its dissolution, the setting of Christian example rather than its corruption. It is a relationship that once again exposes Mary to a male public, yet in a transformed, strictly disembodied form: the final contact between Mary and her male admirers is ultimately maintained not through her body but through the text of her life.

3.5.2. Rutebeuf

Rutebeuf's version of the *Vie de sainte Marie l'Egyptienne* seems to be aware of the slippage between body and text described in *T*, developing this transition in a number of ways. In addition to appropriating many of the structural parallels set up by the *T* version – parallels that, as I have suggested, impact upon our reading of the saint's body and its connection to (male) community – Rutebeuf's poem also introduces a keener awareness of the relationship between body and language, signifier and sign. This appears within the more general context of Rutebeuf's consciousness of his own literary project, a consciousness that serves further to expose the implications of reading Mary (or 'Marie') in relation to her circulation among male communities in a textual rather than a physical form. Furthermore, I will argue that this awareness of language, which leads Rutebeuf to make certain additions and modifications to the saint's life as it appears in *T*, draws out the potential of the text to create communities based upon queer identifications.

The opening of Rutebeuf's *Vie* alludes to precisely such an awareness of literary activity. Rutebeuf begins his poem with a meditation on the good labourer (*bons ouvriers*) who, even if he starts work late, labours so hard that he makes up for the delay. Mary, Rutebeuf claims, was a good labourer of this kind: in the end, she worked hard enough to earn her reward in heaven (RME, ll. 1—17). As Simon Gaunt has argued, Rutebeuf's reference to the *ouvrier* in his introduction to the *Vie* implicitly alludes to the poet's own poetic enterprise: elsewhere in his work, Rutebeuf not only speaks of poetry in terms of labour (using the verb *œuvrer*) but also claims that his name is itself made up of the words *rude* and *œvre*.[72] In the first lines of this poem, Rutebeuf thus invites his audience to compare his labour with that of Mary herself, aligning his earlier profane writing with the sinful activities of the harlot and suggesting

[72] Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 222—24. On Rutebeuf's use of this motif in his Life of Elizabeth of Hungary, see also Uitti, 'The Clerkly Narrator Figure', pp. 406—7.

that the act of writing Mary's *Vie* might have a redemptive effect on the poet akin to that produced by the prostitute's acts of asceticism in the desert.

Although, as Gaunt points out, the introduction to the poem therefore serves as a *mise en abyme* of Rutebeuf's own act of penitence, this is not the only effect of this use of intertextual reference. In comparing the penitence of the repentant harlot with the penitence of the repentant author, Rutebeuf points out that Mary's *œvre*, like that of the writer, is an act performed on the saint's life and the body that it frames. The work of penitence is in both cases a work of revision that remodels the form that the saint's life-story takes, thereby implicitly aligning the activity of literary *remaniement* with the reworking of the form and significance of the body. Rutebeuf's introduction, in addition to comparing the labours of the writer to the labours of the saint, thus infers that this might also work the other way around: the labours of the saint are comparable to those of the writer insofar as both – albeit in different ways – are responsible for shaping the *œvre* that is ultimately the saint's life. As I will suggest later on, some of the implications of this identification between saint and writer resurface in the conclusion to the poem. In more immediate terms, however, Rutebeuf's prefatory punning anticipates the association between body and text that later becomes so important to the poem's narrative development, encouraging his listeners to superimpose the textual, spiritual and physical transformations of the saint insofar as they relate to the *œvre* of her life.

Rutebeuf's poem, unlike *T*, does not stress some of the more obvious parallels between Mary's early life and the early lives of other saints, yet the implications of her sin for the community still pertains. Moreover, the notion that the body is at the heart of this problem is further developed in Rutebeuf's text: Mary's body is not only the instrument of her sin, it is also explicitly made a *symbol* of that sin, physically connoting the corruption that Mary has engendered through her prostitution. Thus, upon finding herself unable to enter the church in Jerusalem, Mary's lament repeatedly focuses on her body as a site of contamination and cause of spiritual impoverishment:

'Lasse moi! Com petit daïsme,
Com fol treü, com fier paiage
Ai rendu Dieu de mon aage!
Onques nul jor Dieu ne servi,
Ainçois ai le cors asservi
A pechier por l'ame confondre:
Terre devroit desouz moi fondre.
Biaus douz Diex, bien voi par tes signes
Que li miens cors n'est pas si dignes
Que il entre en si digne place,
Por mon pechié qui si m'enlace.
Ha! Diex, sire du firmament,

Quant c'ert au jor du Jugement,
Que tu jugeras mors et vis,
Par mon cors qui est ors et vils
Sera en enfer m'ame mise
Et mon cors aprés le Juïse.
Mon pechié m'ert el front escriz.
[…]'
(RME, ll. 212—29)

Mary's body thus plays a significant role in her experience of conversion: the rejection of her body from the church communicates a physical and spiritual unworthiness that prevents her from entering a place of Christian worship just as it will prevent her from entering the kingdom of heaven on the day of Judgement. Moreover, the body of the future saint is clearly central to her perception of the state of sin in which she here claims to be immersed. The saint recognises that she has not paid God his dues because she has instead placed her body in the service of sin and thereby endangered her immortal soul; it is her *body* that is therefore considered unworthy of entering the church, her *body* that is corrupted with sin, and – once again – her *body* that will cause both her soul and body eventually to be placed in hell. Sin itself is also, implicitly, a condition that envelops or is marked upon the body: like Mary's many lovers, it holds her in its embrace (*si m'enlace*) and, come the day of Judgement, will be written on her forehead for all to see.

There is an implicit contrast in Mary's address here between body and soul, a contrast that engenders a particular reading of her own corporeality. Mary now looks upon her body from the position of the repentant harlot as opposed to the gratuitously sinful *meretrix*, reading her damned and damning flesh in the context of a Christian moral scheme that she has embraced through her repentance. Mary speaks of her body as a separate person with a nature and agency all of its own: her body is something for which she is responsible, yet it is also something which she views as separate from herself and her desire for salvation. Mary thus learns to read her body within a particular ideological framework that distances her from her corporeal being and its significance within Christian morality. There is, therefore, a sense in which Mary's soul is one step ahead of her body at least insofar as she has made some spiritual progress in confessing her sins, and this spiritual progress is what her body must now match and underwrite.

The repeated references to the body at this juncture in the narrative are not nearly so frequent in *T*, where, despite the fact that Mary blames God's anger on her sins as a prostitute (*meretris*) and claims to be 'plainne de ville ordure', no mention is made of the body *per se*. Unlike the passage found in Rutebeuf's text, the word *cors* is never mentioned in this initial address to God in the *T* version (ME, ll. 399—408); this

is all the more remarkable considering that Rutebeuf adheres closely to *T* in many parts of the text.[73] This distinction between *T* and *R* might partly be explained by the difference in the date of these two versions of the poem: in its emphasis of the saint's corporeality, it could be argued that *R* is responding to a heightened awareness of the body and its place within a Christian moral scheme that one finds reflected in the writings of thirteenth-century Christian theologians. Mary's reference to the Last Judgement and to the resurrection of the body in Rutebeuf's poem (neither of which appear in *T*) could indeed be read in the context of thirteenth-century discussions of the body's status during its resurrection on the day of Judgement and the notion that the body sinned or gained merit alongside the soul (and was therefore punished or rewarded alongside it).[74]

However, the emphasis on the body in Rutebeuf's poem has a narrative purpose that is in an important sense independent of contemporary theological debates. It is not simply the relationship between body and soul that is at issue here, but also the relationship between the corporeal and the linguistic components of subjectivity. This is certainly the case in Mary's appeal to the statue of the Virgin outside the church, which focuses on the qualitative difference between the body of the Virgin and that of the prostitute while simultaneously dwelling on the similarity in their names. Having identified the sinful state of her own body, Mary's description of the Virgin's immaculate corporeality already implicitly establishes a contrast between their different physical states. In appealing to the statue for help, Mary stresses the sexual purity of the Virgin, addressing her as 'Virge pucele' and 'Virge pucele nete et pure'. The distinction between the two women implicit here is then articulated more directly, when Mary compares the differences in their moral and emotional predispositions, claiming that, whereas the Virgin loved her *ami*, Mary herself loved her enemy, whereas the Virgin loved chastity, Mary loved luxury, a comparison that leads Mary to conclude that 'bien sons de diverse nature | je et tu qui avons un non' (RME, ll. 282—3). The implication here is that *nature* refers not simply to one's 'natural' moral character but also, more

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[73] *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski, pp. 11—12.

[74] Although doctrines of the flesh remained on the whole very similar to those in earlier periods, it has been argued that developments in didactic literature and the communication of doctrine to the laity in the late 12th and 13th centuries gave these doctrinal issues a more practical significance for non-clergy. See Ueltschi, *La Didactique de la chair*. Bynum has argued that the treatment of questions relating to the relationship between body and soul in theological writings from the 13th to the 15th century suggests an important shift in attitudes towards corporeality during this period. Whether or not one agrees with Bynum's assertion that what emerges from these debates is a more positive evaluation of the body and – by extension – of female corporeality, the fact that the body was often at issue in these debates implies a heightened awareness of its place within Christian doctrine in the later Middle Ages. See *Fragmentation and Redemption*, esp. pp. 222—38. The relationship between body and soul in questions of one's final punishment/reward at the Last Judgement is discussed by Aquinas (in the *Summa contra Gentiles*) and Albertus Magnus (on which see Kübel, 'Die Lehre').

importantly, to the service in which the body is willingly employed.[75] The Virgin's *nature* as it is described here is determined by the fact that she has immaculately borne the messiah (a point that is dwelt on at some length by Mary) and has also chosen to love Christ and the chastity for which she is known. Moreover, the use and treatment of the body in this respect defines the status of its linguistic symbolisation: as Mary points out, the Virgin's *nature* has a bearing on the status of her name as well as the body to which that name refers:

> '[...]
> Le tien [name] est de si douz renon
> Que nus ne l'ot ne s'i deduie;
> Li miens est plus amers que suie.
> Nostre Sires ton cors ama;
> Bien i pert, que cors et ame a
> Mis o soi en son habitacle.
> [...]'
> (RME, ll. 284—89)

Thus, the purity of the Virgin's chaste yet maternal body is created and reflected not only in her *nature* but also in her name, which, although nominally the same as that of Mary, nonetheless signifies rather differently. There is a possible *double entendre* in Mary's claim, in speaking of the Virgin's name, that 'nus ne l'ot ne s'i deduie'. On one level, this line means 'no one hears it without rejoicing'; yet, if one reads *ot* as the past tense of *avoir* (instead of the present indicative of *oïr*) and *deduire* as a form of erotic as well as spiritual enjoyment, the line also suggests that, like the Virgin's body, the 'douz renon' of her name retains its integrity, being neither 'had' nor (sexually) enjoyed by anyone. By contrast, Mary's name is 'plus amers que suie' and thus reflects the bitterness of the sins in which she has revelled physically for so long. What Mary suggests here is that, despite the fact that she shares a name with the Virgin, the purity (or impurity) of the sexually-determined subject and the purity of the name go hand-in-hand. Mary's nominal likeness to the Virgin therefore serves to reinforce the difference in their social, sexual and linguistic circulation, a circulation reflected in and connoted by the contrastive meanings of their name. What this disparity between the referents of the same name reveals is thus the close relationship between signifier and signified, a

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[75] The meaning of *nature* in Old French is difficult to pin down. As of the 12th century, the concept was influenced by the rediscovery of Aristotle and was thought of as a property given by God that conformed to divine laws. *Nature* can thus refer to instincts, customs or inclinations thought to be proper to human beings or animals. It can also refer to the sexual body (and, in related fashion, to that which remains outside 'nurture'); and it is also sometimes used to connote lineage, race or breeding. As I argue above, the word as it is used here by Mary seems to refer both to the body and to its deployment in a sexual economy that gives the body a certain cultural and spiritual value. Cf. Godefroy, V, p. 475; *AND*, p. 441; TL, VI, pp. 515—24. See also Knowlton, 'Nature in Old French'.

relationship implicitly reflected in the way that both bodies and names are used, circulated and defined.

As in *T*, Mary's subsequent retreat into the desert in Rutebeuf's poem implies a withdrawal from society that is at once physical and linguistic: both her name and her body are removed from circulation within social networks and remain so until after her death. However, in Rutebeuf's poem, the relationship between *cors*, *nature* and *nom* introduced by Mary's appeal to the statue resurfaces in ways not reflected in *T*. For example, at the moment of Mary's death, just after she has asked admittance to the heavenly company and commended both her body and soul to God, Rutebeuf introduces a characteristically playful passage not found in any other version:

> Lors s'est a la terre estendue
> Si comme ele estoit, presque nue;
> Ses mains croisa sor sa poitrine
> Si s'envelope de sa crine;
> Ses iex a clos avenaument
> Et sa bouche tout ensement.
> Dedenz la joie pardurable
> Sans avoir paor du deable
> Ala Marie avoec Marie.
> Li mariz qui la se marie
> N'est pas mariz a Marion;
> Bien est sauvez par Marie hom
> Qu'a Marie s'est mariez,
> Qu'il n'est pas uns mesmariez.
> (RME, ll. 1133—46)

Read in connection with Mary's earlier appeal to the Virgin, this passage implicitly reworks the antagonism between the names of the two women that Mary asserts in her prayer. Now, Marie not only 'goes with' Marie in the sense that the repentant harlot progresses to heaven with the Virgin Mary; Marie also 'goes with' Marie in a more literal sense, the two nouns now being united through an equivalence in the spiritual and material purity they connote. This is reinforced by the fact that the two Maries are effectively rendered indistinguishable from one another in the lines that follow: it remains unclear as to which Marie is to be married or which ensures man's salvation, the implication being that it is now a question of either or both as opposed to a choice between one or the other.

In relation to Mary's earlier prayer to the Virgin, what Rutebeuf's punning achieves is a transformation of the way the saint circulates within social and linguistic economies. Rutebeuf's *annominatio* redefines the saint's relationship to men both in the poem itself and in relation to his implied male audience by making Mary into the object of marital – as opposed to purely sexual – desire: the saint now circulates as wife rather

than as a prostitute. Also, more importantly, Mary remains physically unattainable despite her reintroduction into pseudo-social and linguistic circulation. As the consonance of Marie and Marie suggests, what Rutebeuf is describing here is the prospect of marriage to a purified *name* rather than purified *body* (which, as the first half of the quotation demonstrates, is described but not mentioned in the *annominatio*). This marriage itself is a form of linguistic union: just as Marie goes with Marie, so Marie goes with her husband (*mariz*) and, by extension, so the male reader/listener who styles himself as a *mariz* for the saint (and/or Virgin) goes with Marie.

Rutebeuf's punning on 'Marie' – which exploits one of the most common metaphors for spiritual union in this period – thus seems to encourage a playful glance, firstly, at what is at stake in the transformation of the saint's relationship to male community and, secondly, at how Mary's linguistic disembodiment affects this relationship.[76] On one level, this passage describes how Mary finally manages to bridge the spiritual chasm between the impurity of her body and name as a prostitute, and the purity of the Virgin's body and name. Yet, on another level, what is represented here is a series of slippages that confuse the boundaries between names, bodies, genders and desires as these are articulated through and around the saint, slippages that implicitly facilitate the formation of a queer spiritual community.

For, as I have argued, when read in connection with Mary's earlier appeal to the Virgin, Marie's marriage to Marie establishes a model of spiritual union grounded in linguistic and physical resemblance: this is a marriage of signifiers, of Marie with the virgin body and name that she has previously adored, and of Marie with her own, purified name and body.[77] The appropriation of this model union sees an opening out of the bond between women (and/or feminine signifiers) to male community: Marie's marriage to Marie becomes that of the *mariz* to Marie and, by extension, that of *hom* to Marie. The Christian community is thus identified with *hom* and invited to see itself as a marriage partner for 'Marie', an identification that involves placing the self in the position of a *mariz* who has usurped the saint's place in an all-female couple, a couple that is in turn formed through the union of two signifiers. Yet, in so doing, what this passage sets up is an identification between *mariz* and 'Marie' that implicitly undermines the heteronormative function of the marriage metaphor. If the *mariz* is 'married' to Marie in the same way that Marie is united with 'Marie', the queer

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[76] Cf. my discussion in Ch. 2.3.3. of the enclosure of the reader in faith as a relationship embodied by St Foy.
[77] Cf. Bersani's notion of homoness: a form of relationality through sameness that surpasses the field of transgressive possibility by being situated outside the social and the relational as these things are conventionally understood. See *Homos*, pp. 113—81.

identification involved in this original, female union is not only maintained intact but is also reproduced as a communal mode of access to the saint. Having assumed the position of *mariz*, the reader/listener not only unites with a plural feminine object comprised of Marie and Marie ('Marie'), he also in a sense unites with a name that is like (if not identical to) that he bears as Marie's *mariz*.

The relationship between the (male) community and the saint is thus subject to complex mediation. However, the depiction of this relationship almost certainly anticipates Zozimas's subsequent discovery of the dead saint and her name and the narrative, community-confirming uses to which it is put upon his return to the monastery. What the above passage therefore suggests is that the saint as disembodied feminine signifier is already potentially a focus for the collective desires of a community that styles itself as her husband, a community formed around its queer desire for union with and incorporation into a feminine signifier.

The sense in which the saint's physical being is separate from the name that refers to and substitutes for it is underlined in subsequent passages, which highlight the distinction between Mary's name and the body she has left behind.[78] After Rutebeuf's punning on her name, the saint is not referred to as 'Marie' again until Zozimas discovers the letter from God alongside the corpse. Having found the saint's body, Zozimas, we are told,

> Puis l'esgarda de chief en chief.
> Si vit un escrit a son chief
> Qui nommoient la crestiene:
> 'C'est Marie l'Egypcienne.'
>
> Adonc a pris le cors de li,
> Moult humblement l'enseveli.
> (RME, ll. 1197—1202)

Thus, as in *T*, Mary's body disappears just as her name is revealed; yet Rutebeuf's treatment of this section stresses the implications of this in a number of ways. In Rutebeuf's version, the letter Zozimas finds does not contain divine instructions for the burial of the saint: it only communicates her name. What this means is that the monk's visual contemplation of the saint shades into the reading of her name: visual contemplation of the body becomes contemplation of divine text. Indeed, Mary is not

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[78] The physical integrity of the corpse is also worth noting here: the dead body and its meagre covering is described in some detail as emphatically untouched. Mary's body not only remains incorrupt after her death, her flesh is protected from the birds and vermin that might approach and destroy it, so that 'sa char ainz ne maumist' (RME, l. 1162). A similar description is found in *T*: *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski, ll. 1317—24.

just named by the divine *escrit*, she becomes it. In a phrase that leaves the referent of the subject pronoun ambiguous, God declares to Zozimas that 'c'est Marie l'Eypcienne', thus implicitly naming the saint's body (*cors*) and the text that appears alongside it (*escrit*) in the same, textually communicated breath.

Zozimas's telling of the story to his fellow monks seems once again to re-enact this process of textual distillation. Rutebeuf's presentation of Zozimas's narrative is episodic rather than linear; it begins by describing how Zozimas came across Mary in the desert, how he asked her to tell him her life and how he discovered the text giving her name upon her death:

> Toute la vie et la maniere
> [Zozimas] Conta au chapitre en couvent,
> C'onques n'en menti par couvent:
> Comme il es desers la trouva
> Et com sa vie li rouva
> A raconter de chief en chief;
> Comment il trova a son chief
> En un petit brievet escrit
> Ce qui son non bien li descrit
> (RME, ll. 1258—66)

The finding of the saint, her story and her name are thus all placed together at the very beginning of Zozimas's account. In so doing, Rutebeuf explores the relationship between body and text in a number of ways. Firstly, just as Zozimas found (*trouva*) Mary, so he finds (*trova*) the text containing her name; the slippage between the physical and the textual suggested in the original representation of Zozimas's discovery of the divine text is once again implicit here. Indeed, the use of the verb *trover* itself potentially connotes not just discovery but also a more poetic form of exposition, suggesting a relationship between the activities of finding and telling in which Zozimas has been (and is) engaged. Secondly, in a similar vein, the rhyming of 'chief en chief' with 'a son chief' suggests a connection between the head of the saint and the 'head' or end of the story of her life, a connection that recalls Zozimas's earlier contemplation of the body of the saint 'de chief en chief'. However, perhaps most striking in this opening section is the way the narrative moves from the beginning of the story as Zozimas experiences it to the end of his acquaintance with the saint. This progression from start to finish, in describing Zozimas's responses to the saint, also marks a transition between modes of encounter: the monk's discovery of the saint prefaces the hearing of the narrative of her life, and this aural 'discovery' then gives way to the disclosure of her name in writing. Even before Zozimas has told his community about Mary's miracles

and the manner of her death, encounter with the saint has – through a process of gradual displacement – become a textually mediated experience.

Thus, once again, male community is consolidated by its contact with a feminine signifier, a contact that involves the community's textually mediated encounter with a physically absent female saint. Like the *hom* saved by marriage to 'Marie' in Rutebeuf's earlier poetic excursion, the community of *preudomme* that venerate the saint represent a collectivity with which the reader/listener is encouraged to identify. In the case of the monastic community, the troubling possibilities of this identification are less overt than they were for the *hom* encouraged to desire union with the saint both as marriage and as a form of identification that blurs the boundaries between subject and saint (*mariz* and Marie). Yet the mimetic confusion implicit in this earlier passage is nonetheless made quite clear in the responses of the monastic brothers. After giving praise to God for the story they have just heard, each of the brothers takes example from the saint and mends his ways:

> N'i ot nul n'amendast sa vie
> Por le miracle de Marie.
> (RME, ll. 1287—88)

The activity of amendment that the monks perform upon their lives clearly aligns them with the amendments that Mary has made to her own life. However, this activity – as suggested by the prologue – is also to some extent that of the writer who reworks the saint's life and, in so doing, makes amends for his own sins, an activity which is also foregrounded by Rutebeuf in the closing lines of the poem. The process of revision and correction that emerges in response to the saint's life therefore implies an identification both with the saint and with the writer of her life, an identification that Rutebeuf extends to his audience in claiming that, like the monastic community, 'nous tuit nous en amendon' (RME, ll. 1289). The *nous* here, as in the epilogue to the *Vie de saint Eustache*, thus serves an interpellative function, encouraging the audience to identify themselves with the textual community that emulates the community of monks emulating both the saint and – in a rather audacious fashion – Rutebeuf himself.

The sense in which the community forms around the writer as well as the saint is further reinforced in the poem's closing lines. Having related how Zozimas recounts his story to his fellow brothers and having encouraged the reading or listening community to pray to the saint, Rutebeuf's closing lines place the final link in the chain of narrative transmission. Although this seems to imply an alignment with the other narrator of Mary's life – Zozimas – the last six lines of the poem (like the opening lines) also

suggest a complex, perhaps ironic identification on the part of Rutebeuf with Mary herself. One of the ways that this identification is inferred is through a conventional appeal to the saint on the part of the author. Rutebeuf (as is often the case with vernacular hagiographers) cites his reworking of the *Vie* as an implicit means of persuading the saint to intervene on his behalf. Yet this traditional appeal recalls both the prologue to the Life, where the *bons ouvriers* eventually earns his/her reward in heaven and also aligns Rutebeuf with a position of supplication previously occupied by Mary, in her appeal to the Virgin.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the final section of the poem is its use of naming. Rutebeuf names himself for the first time in the closing lines of his text, explaining that his name is made up of the words *rude* and *buef* and announcing the fact that he has put the Life we have just read/heard into rhyme (RME, ll. 1301—3). Thus, like Mary, Rutebeuf's name is only explicitly revealed at the very end of the text after his telling of her Life. Moreover, it is the poet's *name* that is ultimately presented to the saint in his request that she ensure that her celestial *ami* does not forget him – or, more to the point, that 'il *Rustebuef* n'oublit mie!' (RME, l. 1306, emphasis added). Rutebeuf thus leaves his audience (and Christ) with his name, as was the case with the saint. Furthermore, in a reversal that implicitly returns to the earlier identification between poet and saint as *œvriers*, it is the saint who is responsible for disseminating the poet's name in a spiritual context, while the poet communicates her name and Life to a mundane audience.

The irony of Rutebeuf's *imitatio* is, of course, that it is the poet himself who is responsible for announcing and explaining this name to a wider public through the text that he has reworked. Unlike Mary, who must mortify the flesh that has sullied her name in order to achieve the reward of the good labourer, Rutebeuf's *œvre* is performed on a textual rather than a physical body. It is through remodelling his embodied, self-authored, self-articulated name *through the medium of the text* that Rutebeuf will ostensibly achieve the heavenly compensation that the *ouvrière* he addresses now supposedly enjoys.

The end of Rutebeuf's poem thus seems to invite reflection on the nature of the identifications that saints' lives conventionally encourage in their role as proponents of textual community. For, although on one level Rutebeuf's poem – like many other saints' lives – advocates a confusion of physical and textual bodies on the part of the community as well as on the part of the saint, this poem seems continually to draw attention to this process of textual transformation. Through its pledged self-emendation

and its appeal for salvation, the community with which the audience is encouraged to identify emulates both the saint and Rutebeuf himself. In looking to the saint the community also looks to Rutebeuf; in amending their lives, the community participates in the work of the good labourer which characterises the *œuvre* of Rutebeuf as well as Mary. The work of repentance that leads 'us' to 'nous en amendon' is (vicariously) that of the writer as well as that of the saint.

Furthermore, what we are left with as the poem's parting shot is *Rustebuef*, the writer; the writer 'qui ceste vie [a] mise en rime', the voice of the communities that invoke the saint, the continuator of the hagiographic narrative tradition begun by Mary and Zozimas, an emulator of Mary herself, and, ultimately, the creator of the text that makes all of these things possible. Rutebeuf's conclusion returns his audience's attention to the structures of identification that make emulation of the saint into a community-confirming activity, yet his closing address amplifies the sense that this identification as well as the communities it creates are reliant upon a text for which he is responsible.[79] Indeed, one of the ways that the emphasis of Rutebeuf's name at the end of his text could be read is as a displacement of the saint's name as the ultimate source of community in the text. Having underlined the importance of Mary's circulation as a disembodied feminine signifier for the consolidation of community, Rutebeuf finally signals to his audience – and to the saint herself – that it is his text that has enabled such circulation to take place. Although the significance of Mary ('Marie') for textual community still pertains, therefore, Rutebeuf nonetheless reminds his audience of his own role in the chain of communication between saint and community. As the linchpin in this network of identifications and communications, it is to Rutebeuf (as both writer and signifier) that the community should look as well as – but also perhaps instead of – 'Marie'.

Finally, then, Rutebeuf's poem provides an example of how medieval texts – through certain kinds of linguistic play – can create objects, desires and identifications that are at once constitutive of community and potentially queer. As I've argued, community here is based on queer identifications and desires that focus on an inherently unfixed linguistic object, an object that simultaneously invokes and elides the sexual body. These identifications trouble sexual identity by blurring the boundaries between subjects as they exist in language. However, the linguistic troubling of gender and sexuality in the poem not only constitutes queer *objects* of desire but also makes

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[79] Nash and Cazelles argue (separately) that Rutebeuf promotes an identification between model and public not emphasised in *T*, by bringing the saint's example closer to home. See Nash, 'Rutebeuf's Contribution' and Cazelles, 'Modèle ou mirage', esp. pp. 20—22.

available queer *subjectivities* that can be appropriated outside the text as a means of consolidating Christian community.

In the context of hagiography, Rutebeuf's poem is in some ways exceptional in its self-conscious treatment of the indeterminacy of language.[80] However, saints' lives often deploy such confusion in producing their effects (and affects); the ineffability of the divine in this literature frequently results in – or is represented by – the confusion or layering of linguistic categories. Contrary to Dinshaw's concept of queer relations, it is, I think, possible to contemplate the more unorthodox resonances of this linguistic disruption for medieval audiences as well as for queer readers in the present. If the textual presentation of the Christian community's being-in-language is essential to the creation of identities and communities outside the text, and if this being-in-language has queer potential, it is not inconceivable that medieval as well as modern readers could identify with this potential in ways that might problematise notions of Christian identity as well as confirm them.

Readings of this kind only establish a partial connection with the ideological framework that would make the text's queer potential into Christian subjectivity and therefore implicitly interrupt the communities that these texts attempt to confirm. Yet this deconstruction – in the context of the work of Agamben and Nancy – might itself be seen as a form of refused engagement that forms community from the unravelling of its own constitutive fiction. This refused engagement nonetheless draws upon the way saints' lives connect with their objects of desire precisely by failing to make contact with them in physical terms, a mode of touching that itself inscribes partial connections with a field of potentiality that provides the foundations for Christian community without necessarily being commensurate with such a community. Seen in this light, modern readings of saints' lives might therefore expose the queer potential of the communities that these texts discursively create, not only as a means of suspending, interrupting and critiquing textual community but also perhaps as a step towards participating in a community that only ever partially touches its object.

In the next chapter I will suggest how the narrative conditions that enable saints' lives to constitute and confirm community might be thought of in intertextual terms. Focusing on the engagements that manuscript collections containing saints' lives stage with their medieval audiences, I will consider how some of the ideological strategies

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[80] Uitti has discussed the way Rutebeuf's Life of Elizabeth of Hungary reincarnates in his own poetic image both hagiographic form and the role of the clerkly narrator that goes with it. As Uitti suggests, this reincarnation remains profoundly traditional even though it reworks hagiographic conventions. See Uitti, 'The Clerkly Narrator Figure', esp. pp. 403—8. Robertson mentions this fusion of novelty and tradition in relation to Rutebeuf's *Vie de sainte Marie l'Egyptienne*: *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, pp. 120—23.

investigated in this chapter might be operative in certain combinations of texts as well as in individual works. This will provide an opportunity to reflect on how the conceptualisation of community in hagiographic literature is related to its articulation in more particularised forms and how relations within a universal field of potentiality are therefore arrived at through an engagement with specificity and difference.

4
Manuscripts

When compared to Latin hagiographic manuscripts of the same period, the thirteenth-century vernacular collections that include saints' lives can seem rather disorganised. The Latin manuscripts generally conform to certain principles of classification based on criteria such as type of saint or type of collection. By contrast, French vernacular manuscripts – as Pamela Gehrke points out – represent alternative methods of classification which seem to be less constrained by such literary taxonomy.[1] These vernacular collections often vary quite widely in form, ranging from large miscellanies to small collections of religious works. Most collections contain texts that are predominantly religious in tone, although saints' lives are also sometimes found alongside chronicles, romances and *chansons de geste*.[2] One of the implications of Gehrke's study of such collections is that the alternative methods of textual selection that one finds in vernacular manuscripts enable them to engage with their audiences by focusing on certain topics or themes. In so doing, such vernacular collections can create textual spaces in which audiences could have found themselves and their interests represented. Yet, as I will contend in this chapter, by shaping and defining the community's textual contours, these collections – in addition to reflecting the communities that may have read them – might also thereby constitute community. The vernacular manuscripts examined here can be considered to 'mirror' their audiences in the sense that they reflect specific interests and concerns and, at the same time, produce an image of a collective body which could have served an interpellative function for those audiences.[3]

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to explore how the forms of identification and interpellation described in relation to individual saints' lives in Chapter Three might also apply to the combinations of texts found in certain medieval *recueils*. I will consider, where possible, how manuscript collections may have operated within what Althusser might describe as the material existence of an ideological

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[1] Gehrke, *Saints and Scribes*. This would not necessarily apply to Old French prose legendaries, which are sometimes direct translations of contemporary Latin collections.

[2] Gehrke's figures would suggest that, of the 83 collections in her survey, there are nearly twice as many manuscripts containing vernacular verse saints' lives alongside religious texts as there are collections which include non-religious works. Her distinction between 'religious' and 'secular' texts should perhaps be used with a certain amount of caution, however. Gehrke, *Saints and Scribes*, pp. 1—11.

[3] Althusser speaks of the structure of ideology as *doublement spéculaire*: it performs a double mirroring that constitutes and is constituted by individuals as subjects. See 'Idéologie', p. 132.

apparatus:[4] that is, within the inscription of ideology – through rituals or practice – onto the subjects that it constitutes and defines. More specifically, as in Chapter Three, I will look at how manuscripts also encourage the recognition of one's place within community by inviting subjects to recognise themselves as such in particular texts or groups of texts.

As well as examining the various ways in which interpellation might occur, this chapter will suggest how, in larger collections, the ideological basis of community and Christian subjecthood in certain texts might be undermined by a manuscript context with encyclopaedic pretensions. This investigation draws on Jesse M. Gellrich's suggestion that the book in the Middle Ages is an 'idea' in the sense that it reflects inherited suppositions about the order of the physical universe and the language used to explain it.[5] The encyclopaedic tendencies of medieval collections reveals, Gellrich claims, a preoccupation with totality and the presence of meaning as absolute that discourages conjecture and hypothesis.[6] The final section of this chapter will therefore consider how this totalising aim – as well as the forms of community it underwrites – might be undermined by texts that challenge such notions of singularity and completeness while, at the same time, forming part of the encyclopaedic project.

Three manuscripts will be considered here in detail: London, British Library, Additional 70513 (the Campsey manuscript), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74 and Paris, Arsenal 3516. The method I have adopted for examining each manuscript is to read the texts that they contain alongside – and occasionally against – one another in order to identify common themes or preoccupations. The textual environment that each collection creates for its readers or listeners is, in each case, explored in some detail; this exploration is in turn used to suggest how these manuscripts engage with and interpellate subjects and communities. Although the contents of the manuscripts under discussion are summarised at the beginning of relevant sections, I have not given lengthy codicological descriptions of each manuscript in the main body of this chapter. Readers may therefore wish to refer to Appendix 1 and Tables 1—4 at the beginning of sections dealing with each manuscript in order to get a clearer picture of the size, format, layout and contents of the collection about to be discussed.

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[4] Althusser, 'Idéologie', pp. 118—22.
[5] This could be compared to Stock's insistence on the symbiotic relationship between text and community. See Ch. 3.1. above.
[6] Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book*, esp. pp. 18—21; 29—50. For another discussion of the medieval idea of the text in relation to modern concepts of textual stability, see Taylor, *Textual Situations*, pp. 1—25.

As I will suggest in my reading of the Campsey manuscript, the interpellative function of hagiography can be harnessed to an effort to captivate and construct communities in locally and possibly sexually specific ways. By contrast, in the Canonici manuscript, the creation of a notion of community in which audiences might recognise themselves can be linked to the situation of Christian subjects within a model of biblical time and geography that seeks to overcome such particularities. In relation to the Arsenal manuscript, I consider how the forms of community promoted by certain groups of texts might be undercut by reading parts of the collection alongside and against one another. Gender and sexuality often play an important role in the ideological constitution of community in these collections, where the relationship between the universal and the particular, the spiritual and the physical is often crucially at stake. However, as I shall suggest, communities may be conceptualised in relation to gender in vastly different ways, resulting in a deployment of gender and sexuality in these manuscripts that produces communal identification through – and sometimes at the expense of – certain kinds of engagement with sexual difference.

4.1. The Campsey Manuscript (London, BL, Additional 70513)

This manuscript (formerly Welbeck IC1) is a relatively well-known collection of saints' lives with an impressive history of scholarly descriptions, editions and commentaries behind it.[7] The first quire of the manuscript (ff. 1—8) dates from the early fourteenth century; the rest of the collection dates to the last quarter of the thirteenth. The thirteenth-century section that will provide the focus for my discussion here begins with the Life of St Thomas Becket by Guernes de Pont-Sainte Maxence (missing ll. 1—138). The section then includes a *romanz* of St Mary Magdalene by Guillaume le Clerc; the Lives of Edward the Confessor, Edmund Archbishop of Canterbury by Matthew Paris, Audrey (Etheldreda) of Ely by Marie; and the Life of St Osith. The collection continues with the *passio* of St Foy by Simon of Walsingham, the Lives of St Modwenna and of St Richard Bishop of Chichester and, finally, the Life of St Catherine of Alexandria by Clemence of Barking.[8]

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[7] The manuscript has been the subject of scholarly attention since at least 1903, when Strong's description appeared in the catalogue of Welbeck's historical documents. Meyer brought the manuscript to the attention of an even wider international audience in 1906. Russell has given a thorough account of the manuscript's modern provenance; I am grateful to him for sharing a copy of this article with me while it was still unobtainable in print. See Strong, *Catalogue*, pp. 5—8; Meyer, 'Légendes', pp. 328—78; and Russell, 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'.

[8] Russell provides a comprehensive list of editions of the texts in the collection as well as describing the contents of the manuscript. See Pierre d'Abernon, *Richard*, ed. by Russell, pp. 14—15 and Russell, 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'. For contents see Table 1 below; for a description of the manuscript, see Appendix 1.

Portrait initials of saints mentioned in the collection appear at the beginning of several texts in the thirteenth-century section of the manuscript. It is worth giving a complete listing of these miniatures (reproduced here as plates 1—6), as some descriptions of the manuscript either make no mention of the illuminations or give details that are not entirely accurate.[9] The portraits all appear at the beginning of the text concerning the relevant saint and include Edward the Confessor (f. 55va), Audrey of Ely (f. 100va), Osith (f. 134va), Modwenna (f. 156vb), Richard of Chichester (f. 222ra), and Catherine of Alexandria (f. 246ra). A summary of these miniatures with folio numbers is given in Table 1.

Part of the interest of the collection is that it was owned in the fourteenth century by the nunnery of Campsey Abbey, near Woodbridge in Suffolk, where it was used for refectory reading (the manuscript contains notes to this effect on f. 265v).[10] Using this, as well as a range of other evidence, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has described the significance of the collection as an example of women's conventual literary culture in Anglo-Norman England from 1150 to 1300.[11] As Wogan-Browne points out, the collection is at once a representative example of contemporary Anglo-Norman reading matter and a unique and carefully selected compilation reflecting the interests of a particular female community.[12] All of the texts in the collection – although some of the versions are not found in other manuscripts – are represented elsewhere during this period. The collection in fact brings together around half of the kinds of saints' lives available in Anglo-Norman England from the twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth century. At the same time, the manuscript represents a choice of reading matter that reflects professed women's interests within seigneurial, family, monastic and ecclesiastical networks.[13]

Wogan-Browne argues that the selection of saints' lives in the collection is largely concerned with figures of insular hagiography, figures who often have particular

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[9] For instance, Karl mentions the illuminations but mistakes Audrey of Ely for 'un moine devant un livre'. Södergård makes the same mistake in the introduction to his edition of the Life of St Edward the Confessor in the same manuscript, as does Laurent in *Plaire et édifier* (p. 30). Russell's excellent study of the manuscript has recently remedied the situation. See Karl, 'Notice', p. 210; *Edward*, ed. by Södergård, p. 47; Russell, 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'.

[10] These notes read: 'ce livre deviseie a la priorie de kanpseie de lire a mangier'. As Russell indicates, *deviseie* could have a number of meanings in this context which could mean that the collection was donated or bequeathed to the priory, or, alternatively, that it was planned or commissioned by the priory for the purpose of mealtime reading. See Russell 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'.

[11] *SLWLC*, esp. pp. 6—12 and 170—76.

[12] On unity and provenance, see also Russell: 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'.

[13] On the relative prominence of hagiographic writing by, for and about women in Anglo-Norman England, see also Bartlett, 'The Hagiography of Angevin England', p. 40; and MacBain, 'Anglo-Norman Women Hagiographers'. This is nonetheless seen alongside the insignificance of *new* female saints in Britain between 1000 and 1700.

regional or local significance for the Campsey community. The only non-insular saints included in the collection are Mary Magdalene, Foy of Agen and Catherine of Alexandria. Furthermore, the manuscript links the two major female communities of Barking and Campsey through the inclusion of texts written by women at Barking or supported by the abbess or community there in the twelfth century. Wogan-Browne goes on to suggest that this hagiographic collection shares interests in particular saints with Barking (another élite female community) and with Isabella Countess of Arundel, who is associated with a number of Lives in the collection (notably those of Becket, Edward the Confessor, Edmund Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard Bishop of Chichester).[14] These parallels, claims Wogan-Browne, reveal continuities between conventual and court interests: religious women's reading overlaps with that of noble laywomen and their milieu.

I do not intend to go over the historical ground already amply covered by Wogan-Browne with respect to the institutional and communal contexts within which this manuscript may have been read. I would, however, like to pursue her suggestion that this collection represents the particular interests of the female community that owned and read it and, at the same time, locates for that community an identity based on such interests. I would like to do this by looking more closely at the thematic and representational concerns of the collection, considering the relationships between the various texts in the collection but also taking into account the connections between the miniatures and the selection of texts that they adorn. In so doing, I hope to consider the function of this manuscript not only as a means of articulating and/or projecting a particular kind of communal identity but also as an object that might imaginatively constitute that community through processes of interpellation comparable to those described in Chapter Three.

To speak of identification or exemplarity in this collection nonetheless requires a certain amount of qualification. Although these texts may be seen as separate to some extent, the connections that bind them together suggest that their value as models is not simply confined to individual texts. I will suggest that, taken thematically, they construct an image of female identity within community that would have resonated with

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[14] Matthew Paris dedicated the Edmund Life to Isabella; the Latin *Vita* of Richard of Chichester by Ralph Bocking is dedicated to her, but the Anglo-Norman version of this *Vita* says nothing of her as patron (though it does include her as a bystander in one of the miracles). The dedication of Matthew Paris's Life of Becket is anonymous, only 4 leaves currently being extant; the Countess's association with some of Matthew Paris's texts comes through being named in the famous flyleaf of the Alban manuscript at Trinity College. Wogan-Browne suggests that Isabella may have had a hand in commissioning the Campsey manuscript itself. *SLWLC*, pp. 170—76. See also Russell's discussion of patronage and provenance in 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'; and Dean and Boulton, pp. 289—90; 301 (entries 521, 522 and 545).

the community at Campsey. Yet this identity depends on a complex process of identification and interpretation, wherein authors and communities as well as saints become figures for emulation. It will be my contention that the collection promotes a model for response that not only focuses on the example set by the saints contained within its pages but also foregrounds certain networks or chains of relationships within that exemplary context. This consideration of how response to the collection might be shaped thus returns to some of the concerns of previous chapters insofar as it posits a relational model which might be used to articulate (and produce) particular kinds of identification. However, as I will suggest, the relational framework in the Campsey manuscript is given a specific value: although in many ways it invokes a universal model of Christian community, the networks that underpin such a community often privilege relationships between women.

4.1.1. Saints: Teaching Between Women

The first thing that should be noted is the focus on female authority and learning, which surfaces in a range of different contexts in the manuscript. The female saints who feature in the collection perform a number of important functions in this respect.[15] Mary Magdalene, despite having a relatively peripheral role in the story told by Guillaume le Clerc, has an important preaching and teaching role at the beginning of the tale. Having arrived in Marseilles after Christ's resurrection, the Magdalene stands outside the town's pagan temple and preaches to the *fole gent* who visit it. There is a relatively long passage describing this episode, in which the Magdalene's oratory skills and presentation receive full marks:

La magdalene out le cors gent
Lur comenca a preeschier
Quil lessassent a pechier
E adorassent ihesu crist
Bien lur enseigna *e* descrist
Come il ert en terre venuz
Et cum il sesteit contenuz
Et cum il est resuscitez
Et cum il est au ciel muntez
Et coment al derain iur
Il vendreit estre iugeur
Plusurs q*ui* la vire*n*t tant bele
Entendirent a la querele
E l'escuterent dulcement
Kar ele p*ar*lot m*u*lt noblem*en*t
Cet ce nesteit mie merveillie

[15] On the use of female (usually virgin) saints as examples for women, see Wogan-Browne, 'Saints' Lives and the Female Reader'.

La buche est bele et vermeillie
Ki les piez deu beise aveit
Curteisement parler saveit
(f. 50vb)[16]

Here, preaching and teaching are intimately connected to the Magdalene's physical appearance and (implicitly sexual) allure. However, the focus on her beauty, her *cors gent* and her *buche vermeillie* is not at the expense of an emphasis on her abilities as a preacher; on the contrary, the one informs the other. People admire her beauty and, it is suggested, *therefore* listen attentively to what she has to say. Her beautiful red lips are praised not simply for their size or colour (as is often the case in descriptions of ladies in lyric poetry) but because they have kissed the feet of Christ and, more importantly, because they are vehicles of noble and courteous speech. The Magdalene's sexuality, far from being an impediment to her role as a disseminator of divine teaching, actively and positively informs her success as such.

The figure of the beautiful and eloquent female pedagogue is similarly reflected in the lives of the virgin martyrs represented in the collection. Both Foy and Catherine act as mouthpieces for the God that they worship, demonstrating and defending a faith that they claim is founded both on intuition of the divine and on scriptural, sometimes textual authority. For instance, in responding to Decius's demand that she worship Diana, Foy rebuffs his offer *mut sagement*, claiming that

En seinte escripture ay apris
Par les scienz ke furent iadis
Ke dela buche deu parlerent
Ke voiz deu diebles appellerent
[...]
(f. 150ra)[17]

The young virgin thus asserts not only her knowledge of scripture, but also claims a place for herself within a tradition of Christian learning and teaching. It is significant that the authority Foy cites here is simultaneously written and oral: the scriptural evidence to which the saint refers is supported by the testimony of those authorities who speak (*parler*) from the mouth of God. In repeating their claims that the pagan gods are *deables*, Foy therefore herself occupies such a position: she too speaks *de la buche deu*. This oral reproduction of the teachings of scripture supports her position by reference to divine text as well as divine word; moreover, it makes her a representative of the

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[16] All quotations are taken from the Campsey manuscript (with line numbers in available editions given in notes). For corresponding text in the version of this poem contained in Paris, BN fr. 19525 see Guillaume le Clerc, *Mary Magdalene*, ed. by Reinsch, ll. 38—56. In the Campsey passage, *cet ce nesteit* (l. 16) would make more sense as *ce nesteit*, *ce ne esteit*, or *et ce nesteit*.
[17] See Simon of Walsingham, *Foy*, ed. by Baker, ll. 335—38.

tradition to which she makes reference, allowing her quite publicly to repeat the Christian teachings that she at once asserts and defends.

Catherine of Alexandria is of course well known as a learned example of female sainthood. The saint's debate with the fifty pagan clerks whom she defeats with divinely-inspired oratorical prowess is a memorable example of Catherine's abilities in this respect. As other commentators have shown, Clemence's version of the Life of this saint often uses Catherine's intelligence and wit to undermine the roles accorded to women in other vernacular genres such as romance and lyric poetry.[18] When asked if she would like to have a statue made of gold in her honour, for instance, the saint responds, rather facetiously, that such a statue would suit her very well, only it would be inanimate and likely to be perched upon by birds. Catherine's response, especially when seen in the more general context of the text's attempt to undermine courtly discourse, aims both at the pagan worship of idols and also at the tendency – quite literally – to idolise women, a tendency found rather closer to home in western medieval culture of this period. Like the Magdalene, Catherine redefines the conventions for representing women found elsewhere in non-religious vernacular texts. However, Clemence's version of the Life perhaps goes one step further: it actively reshapes the roles accorded to women by certain vernacular traditions.

Other saintly representatives of female learning and authority in the manuscript include Audrey and Modwenna. Both of these saints are foundresses, abbesses and figures of influence in female communities as well as in the wider social networks in which those communities function. Apart from her roles as foundress, miracle worker, peacemaker and prophet, in the latter part of her life Audrey takes on an instructional role vis-à-vis the lay public who has heard of her now widespread reputation (f. 113vb).[19] The saint also notably instructs her sister Sexburg in the ways of the religious life, initiating her into the discipline of the order after she decides to join Audrey in her existence as a nun (f. 114ra—114rb).[20] Modwenna too is depicted as an important authority figure charged with – among other things – punishing misdemeanours in the community beyond the convent walls, raising and educating children, instructing and sometimes chastising the nuns in the various foundations that she establishes around Britain, corresponding in a pastoral capacity with bishops and abbesses, and visiting kings and popes. Modwenna's function in the various communities with which she has

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[18] Batt, 'Clemence of Barking's Transformations of *Courtoisie*'; Wogan-Browne 'Saints' Lives and the Female Reader'.
[19] Marie, *Audrey*, ed. by Södergård, ll. 1817—28. As the only extant version of this poem, the Campsey text provides the base manuscript for Södergård's edition.
[20] Marie, *Audrey*, ed. by Södergård, ll. 1837—70.

dealings is deemed so important that, as she is dying in one of her foundations in Scotland, several delegations of eminent – even royal – colleagues, friends and kin arrive from Scotland, England and Ireland. Indeed, their distress at the thought of losing her is such that they contact her brother, bishop Ronan, in order that he might persuade her to have pity on them all and hang on for a few more years.

The wide selection of exemplars of particularly female wisdom and authority that appear in the manuscript is in itself worthy of note. However, I would suggest that, over and above this, the Campsey collection enables this exemplarity to be viewed in a particular light. The learning and status with which these saints are linked is frequently seen in the context of their function as representatives of Christian pedagogy, a function that is often exercised within a learning environment that includes – and even privileges – female education. For example, the Magdalene's preaching and intercession is effective, in the first instance, upon the childless wife of a rich pagan and the couple's spiritual journey concerns both man and wife in equal measure. Audrey, though twice coerced into political marriage, nonetheless (and maybe even therefore) provides an example for other contemporary women (f. 109rb)[21] and for her kin, most notably Sexburg her sister, who follows her into the religious profession and becomes a saint in her own right.

Modwenna is also associated with teaching and learning in the female communities that she founds. Her Life in fact includes a number of first person sermons (or sermon-like discourses) which she delivers to various convent communities, who are usually addressed using the collective term *filles* (a point to which I will return later on). Furthermore, in addition to the numerous letters, sermons and pieces of advice that she gives to the nuns in the religious houses that she establishes, Modwenna also plays a conspicuous part in the religious careers of several other women. For instance, just before leaving the court of the British king Atulf on a visit to see her English foundations, Modwenna persuades the king's sister Edith to leave with her in order to pursue a religious vocation to which the lady seems suited. Edith is subsequently made abbess of Polesworth abbey and later becomes a saint. Modwenna also confers special recognition on professed women whom she feels have merited it. She rewards St Bride, one of her abbesses, with a visit when she hears of her exceptional virtue (although this does not prevent Modwenna from giving the abbess advice on virtuous living before her departure). The trip results in the performance of two miracles associated with the abbey

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[21] This is Södergård's claim. The text reads: 'Saincois ke receut monial vie, | du plusurs terres fu contee | la novele de saint audree | et plusurs de ceus ky loirent | despirent le mond *e* guerpirent, | a religion se tornerent | et lur vies en amenderent'. See Marie, *Audrey*, ed. by Södergård, ll. 1198—1204.

of which Bride has charge, at least one of which Bride is able to claim joint authorship over with Modwenna.

Finally, Catherine not only converts the Empress of her pagan persecutor (as seen in Section 2.3.4.), she also addresses specifically female members of the crowds who gather to watch her persecution, encouraging them towards a correct interpretation of her sufferings. Thus, as the saint is about to be beheaded, she sees the masses lamenting her plight yet addresses her remarks to the women in the crowd:

Les dames prent a conforter
Pur ceo q*ue* pl*us* les veit plurer
Ohi fait ele gentilz puceles
Et vus barunesses beles
Pur deu vus pri ne me plaignez
Ne de ma mort pite naiez
Si ceo est naturel pite u amur
U charite ait amiste u ducur
Si vus enioissez ou mei
Kar ia mapele mun bon rei
Le men espus le men ami
En ki sur tute rien ma fi
Les plurs ke vus p*ur* mei perdez
Sur vus memes les tornez
Ke vu*s* gete li bons d*eus* hor*s* de cest err*ur*
Ainz ke vengez al derein iur
(f. 264rb—264va)[22]

Catherine's address thus has a didactic function aimed at married and unmarried noble women, a function that instantiates a pedagogic relationship between the saint and her female audience. Her discourse proceeds in several stages, gradually redirecting the pitying female gaze in a way that substitutes subject for object. Initially, Catherine asks the ladies not to have pity on her. However, the saint then claims that, if it is natural to feel love and pity, the women should rejoice with her, as she is about to join the king and lover in whom she has faith. This redirection of emotion encourages the women to view the saint's death from a Christian perspective by establishing a form of female community. Catherine argues that the ladies should rejoice *ou mei*, meaning that they should rejoice with her, as a community of believers, but also that they should rejoice as she does. The sense in which Catherine encourages the female members of the crowd to emulate her by adopting a sentimental position associated with the Christian perspective

[22] See Clemence of Barking, *Catherine*, ed. by MacBain, ll. 2535—2550. Note that this edition uses *A* (Paris BN nouv. acq. fr. 4503) as the base manuscript. In the passage from the Campsey text *u amur* (l. 6) and *u ducur* (l. 7) seem to result in hypermetric lines. The reading offered by *A* would make more sense here: 'se ceo est naturel pitié | u charité u amistié'. The 14th line in the quotation is hypometric (provided in *A* by *pri*: 'sur vus meimes pri les turnez'). Again, l. 15 is metrically overweight at twelve syllables long (cf. Ca, l. 2549). It should nonetheless be borne in mind that Anglo-Norman texts often seem to be metrically inconsistent. See Evans, 'La Versification Anglo-Normande'.

of the saint is reinforced by the last part of her speech. In the final stage of her discourse, Catherine turns the pitying regard of the spectator upon the women who lament her death, reversing the relationship between the female subject and object of the gaze. It is thus no longer the saint that animates the pathetic spectacle but rather the women who weep for her. The saint therefore combines Christian teaching with a form of *imitatio* that has as its final goal the establishment of a community of believers; yet – unusually for a saint's life – the privileged addressees of such teaching are women.

4.1.2. Educational Genealogies Between Texts

The best intertextual example of such pedagogical alliances is the supposed connection between Saints Osith, Modwenna and Edith, a connection that is mentioned twice in the manuscript, in separate texts. In the Life of St Modwenna, Osith is represented as the ward of St Edith. One day, when sent by Edith to Modwenna with a book, Osith is blown into a river, where she remains for three days before the joint efforts of Modwenna and Edith have the effect of miraculously recovering both Osith and the book unharmed from the water (ff. 176rb—177rb).[23] The Life of St Osith that appears in the collection similarly includes an account of this miracle, which, although purportedly describing the same event, is nonetheless a separate version to that included in the Life of Modwenna. It is possible that the inclusion of this episode in Osith's Life is a deliberate attempt to link the text to the Life of Modwenna in this manuscript, although this long-held assumption has recently been challenged by Jane Zatta.[24]

In the Life of St Osith, the drowning miracle appears in the context of the young saint's upbringing and therefore foregrounds not only the relationship between Modwenna and Edith (which is clearly in evidence in the *Vie seinte Modwenne*) but also the relationship between Osith and her two female guardians. Osith's powerful and saintly family (including, notably, 'auntes *e* neces de g*ra*nt chastete') advise her father to place the little princess with Modwenna, which he does once the child is able to speak. Osith is nurtured first of all by Modwenna, who 'a merveillie [l']ama e chere

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[23] *Osith*, ed. by Baker, ll. 271—358. This is an edition of the poem in the Campsey collection.

[24] The miraculous drowning story in Osith's Life may be an interpolation based on Conchubranus's Life of Modwenna (as amplified by Geoffrey of Burton), an interpolation which was added to the late 12th -century text in the 13th century. Baker attributes the Modwenna episode to the 2nd half of the 13th century on philological grounds, while dating the rest of the poem to a period no later than the end of the 12th century. Russell suggests that the 1st half of the poem may have been rewritten specifically for the nuns at Campsey. Zatta points to the problems with Baker's linguistic analysis and the consequences of his misidentification of William de Vere in Leland's notes, concluding that there is no reason to consider the work as a composite text. See *Osith*, ed. by Baker, esp. pp. 480—81; Russell, 'The Secularization of Hagiography', p. 14; Bethell, 'The Lives of St. Osyth' (for a comparative survey of the drowning episode in all versions of the Lives of Saints Osith and Modwenna see pp. 83—85; for discussion of the relationship between versions see pp. 104—07); Zatta, 'The *Vie Seinte Osith*', pp. 375—6.

tint' (f. 136ra—136rb);[25] then, when Modwenna has to travel, she sends Osith to Edith, who willingly accepts responsibility for the child. Time passes and Modwenna returns to the foundation in Stranesrale, whereupon Edith finds a book full of proverbs, wise sayings and examples of virtue and sanctity that she decides to share (*communer*) with Modwenna (f. 136rb).[26]

It is against this background that Osith is asked to transport the book to her former guardian. Thus, connections between Osith and Modwenna are emphasised which are not mentioned in the Life of the latter saint.[27] Furthermore, unlike the same episode in the Life of Modwenna, Osith's Life at this stage dwells upon both the educational purpose behind sending the book and the relationships between the three women.[28] Before sending Osith to Modwenna, Edith calls the girl to her and gives her the following message:

> Plereit dist ele bele seur
> A nostre mere modwen aler
> A li cest livre par moi porter
> Dirrez ke *gran*z bienz ipuet trover
> Dunt se memes puet amender
> Et par doctrines kele trovera
> Tuz les sens amender purra
> (f. 136rb—136va)[29]

This discourse, although brief, succinctly articulates two things. Firstly, the relationship between Osith, Edith and Modwenna is underlined at the outset: Osith is addressed by Edith as her sister (emphasising the pseudo-familial, institutional connection between them) and sent to their 'mother' Modwenna. Secondly, Edith suggests that sending the volume plays a part in reinforcing such relationships through maintaining educational links between them. These family connections are based not on consanguinity but on one's participation in an educational and pastoral network. The book Edith sends mediates relations of pastoral instruction between women: Modwenna may not only learn from it herself (as has Edith), she can also use it to help her community (*tuz les sens*).

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[25] *Osith*, ed. by Baker, ll. 203—215.
[26] *Osith*, ed. by Baker, ll. 232—40.
[27] In the Life of Modwenna, Osith is simply introduced as 'une pucele | ke mut esteit bone ebele' who lives with St Edith (f. 176rb).
[28] Edith's discourse serves a less elaborate, more functional purpose in the vernacular Life of Modwenna: 'amye bele | osith fet ele vus prendrez | i ceo livere ke vus veez | e a ma dame la porterez | pur deu vus pri ne vus targez' (f. 176rb; *Modwenna*, ed. by Baker and Bell, ll. 2592—96). Geoffrey of Burton's account mentions the educational value of the volume but makes Modwenna a mistress rather than a mother: 'Vocauit itaque puellam Osid, et dixit ei: "Vade", inquit, "ad dominam" (sic enim apellabatur a suis) "*et defer* ei ex parte mea *volumen istud* in quo valeat ipsa legere et fortasse aliquid *sancte contemplationis* invenire." See Appendix V of Bethell, 'The Lives of St. Osyth', pp. 125—127 (p. 126).
[29] *Osith*, ed. by Baker, ll. 242—48. As Baker indicates, the 4th line is hypermetric; *ke* could be omitted.

It is in this sense significant that the drowning miracle in the Life of St Osith highlights the loss and recovery of both child and book. Unlike the accounts in the Latin or vernacular Lives of Modwenna, Osith falls into the river attempting to recover the book she has dropped into the water; similarly, although Edith and Modwenna go looking for Osith (rather than Osith and the book), Osith emerges from the water clean and dry with her book (*son livre*) and the poem stresses the fact that 'si cum del tut fu virgine pure | son livre e li sunt sanz muilliure' (f. 137rb).[30] As Zatta has rightly pointed out, Osith's post-miracle purity here is thus more than simply a matter of clean clothes: the book serves as a metonym for Osith herself, being, as is she, 'a highly prized object of great value that is lost and restored thanks to God's grace'.[31] There is therefore a sense in which the girl's body has been miraculously recovered from the river on account of its virtue and also as a demonstration of the power of that virtue to work miracles. The only thing I would add to this description is that, precisely because this recovery depends on Osith's purity, there is a sense in which her body has been shown to possess the virtues of the book she carried: like the virgin body, both book and girl are unsullied in physical and metaphysical respects. This episode could therefore be seen to anticipate the relationship between Osith's sexual integrity within marriage and her virtue as a saint commemorated in writing by prefiguring the connection between her virginity and the textual example that she sets through the written account of her life.

The emphasis of this episode in the Life of St Osith is perfectly understandable when seen in the context of the Life as a whole. Osith's vow of virginity and her assiduous adherence to this vow in her marriage are central features of her identity as a saint and it therefore makes sense to draw out her essential purity in an interpolated miracle that would otherwise seem to have little to do with her maidenhood. Yet, the fact that this is done in connection with other additions to the tale is worthy of note. As intimated above, the amplification of the original story not only stresses virginity but also emphasises female educational and pastoral networks. It is significant in this respect that Osith's virginity is, more generally speaking, seen in terms of her educational genealogy: even before she has met Modwenna or Edith, Osith is described as taking example from two of her aunts – Keneburc and Eadurc – who were similarly saintly and chaste (f. 135vb).[32] Osith's association with the purity of the book (and vice

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[30] *Osith*, ed. by Baker, ll. 355—56.
[31] Zatta, 'The *Vie Seinte Osith*', p. 379.
[32] *Osith*, ed. by Baker, ll. 147—56. See also: 'k*a*nt modwen fu en cel mene | frethuuald sa fillie ad repelle | le sunt e ioius tuit li parent | de sa porture e enseinement | tuit fu son purpos e desir | virgine vivre *et* morir' (f. 137va; *Osith*, ed. by Baker, ll. 377—82).

versa) thus signifies in a much broader context than that of the miracle itself, hinting at her precocious emulation of virtuous kinswomen and her later association with the saintly models that Edith suggests the volume contains.[33] Indeed, it is tempting to see in the book containing 'examples [...] a *gra*nt plente | de vertuz *e* de seintete' that Edith sends to Modwenna a codicological correlative of the Campsey manuscript itself, a manuscript similarly shared between women for the purposes of communal instruction in which Osith, Modwenna and Edith animate and embody the virtues of the text in their turn.

4.1.3. Educating Men, Women and the (Un)Dead

The emphasis on educational relationships in the manuscript is certainly not confined to women educating or being educated by women. Indeed, the emphasis on female pedagogy and learning should be seen in the broader context of other educational interactions between women and men. In the Life of Edward the Confessor, for example, the saint both takes example from female (as well as male) models and, in his turn, encourages his wife to lead a chaste and pious life. Thus, in his appeal to God after he is asked to take a wife, Edward invokes the examples of Joseph, Susanna, Judith and the Virgin explaining that, like them, he wishes to preserve his chastity (ff. 63va—64rb).[34] Having finally agreed on a bride (Edith), Edward then elegantly exhorts her to maintain her own chastity and Edith courteously agrees, claiming that she is more than willing to grant this request as she has always wished to offer God her chastity in any case (f. 65ra—65rb).[35] One might also mention in this respect Audrey's relationship to Wilfrid, archbishop of York. When Audrey returns to Ely after the travels she undertakes to escape her second husband, Wilfrid hears of her return and goes to her 'pur li conforter | et enseigner *et* endoctriner | la droite voie par sermon | de seinte conversation' (f. 113ra).[36] Audrey reciprocates by recalling Wilfrid from the exile imposed on him by her second husband. Similarly, Modwenna is confirmed in her early devotion to God when she hears St Patrick preaching in Ireland; having given her a

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[33] Cf. Zatta's argument that the miraculous recovery (as well as the *Vie* more generally) individualises Osith, serving to reinforce her role as an anti-dynastic, anti-ecclesiastical saint. 'The *Vie Seinte Osith*' (esp. pp. 377—80).

[34] *Edward*, ed. by Södergård, ll. 1145—82. Note that the base manuscript of this edition is *V* (Vatican Reg. Lat. 489). *W* (the Campsey version) is used as the base for ll. 10—1462, which are missing from *V*. Nevertheless, Södergård claims that – apart from differences in orthography and in length – *W* and *V* are almost identical (pp. 52—53). See also Dean and Boulton, pp. 290—91 (entry 523).

[35] *Edward*, ed. by Södergård, ll. 1347—86.

[36] Marie, *Audrey*, ed. by Södergård, ll. 1719—22.

nun's habit, Patrick then hands Modwenna and another girl, Athee, over to a holy man who confirms their faith and teaches them *lettrure*.

Perhaps the most complicated example of educational links between men and women occurs in the *romanz* of the Magdalene. Having died in childbirth on a boat to Jerusalem, a rich pagan woman converted by the Magdalene is left with her new-born child (who is still alive) on a nearby island, where her husband covers her body with a hollow rock. The woman's husband continues as planned on his pilgrimage to the holy land, where he meets St Peter and embarks on an educational tour of the holy sites. Peter instructs (*endoctriner*, *enseigner*) the man in this way for two years. Then, on his way back home, the man visits the island where his wife is 'buried' and finds the child still alive, thanks to the miraculous intervention of the Magdalene. When he asks the saint to revive his wife as an additional favour, the woman returns to life and explains that, thanks to the Magdalene's intervention, her soul has never been parted from him:

> Unkes de vus puis ne departi
> Kantq*ue* vus veistes le vi
> Q*ua*nt saint piere vus *con*dueit
> La magdaleine me teneit
> Ke me faisez trestut veer
> Et tut oir *et* tut saveer
> Et ieo vus sai trestut recunter
> (f. 55ra)[37]

The educational grand tour of the holy land has therefore been experienced by both members of the couple: what the woman's husband has seen and learnt from St Peter, she too has seen and learnt. Moreover, the woman's educational involvement is, unlike that of her husband, connected to the Magdalene. It is the Magdalene who has guided her as her husband is being led by St Peter and it is also she who has enabled the woman to see, hear and comprehend (*saveer*) what her husband is shown. This rather unusual pedagogical trajectory thus involves both a male and a female saint in the posthumous education of a dead wife and mother who, thanks to the Magdalene's intervention, is miraculously able to nourish her child better than any wetnurse ever could *and* obtain a first-class Christian education.

Thus, seen as a whole, what the manuscript highlights are women's roles as educators, protectors and figures of authority but also, perhaps equally importantly, women's roles as students and recipients of education and advice. The suggestion in

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[37] Guillaume le Clerc, *Mary Magdalene*, ed. by Reinsch, ll. 637—43. The final line of the quotation has 9 syllables; to make the line octosyllabic, *trestut* should be reduced to *tut*. In Reinsch's edition, this line reads 'e jeo vus sai tut reciter' (l. 643).

many of the texts I have mentioned is that women's roles as students are to be seen on a continuum with their roles as educators and authority figures. Although women in these texts are subject to male authority the collection implies that such subjection is one step towards participating in a long and illustrious tradition of female education represented in the manuscript in which women can be tutors as well as tutees.

4.1.4. Authors and Identification

In addition to the examples set by the saints themselves, there are of course a number of female authors (and one female patron) included in the collection. The Lives of Edward the Confessor, Audrey of Ely and Catherine of Alexandria are all written by women, although not all of these writers are explicitly named in the manuscript.[38] Implicit (or explicit) identification between author and saint is not especially unusual; its queer possibilities were explored in Chapter Three. In at least one of the texts in the Campsey collection, however, this identification is based on female profession and seems to be underlined by the miniature that accompanies the text. In the *Vie seinte Audree*, Audrey's vernacular biographer mentions that, like the saint, she too is a nun.[39] The image used to depict the saint in the manuscript seems to reinforce this connection between author and saint further in that the illuminated initial that begins Audrey's Life depicts a woman in a black habit preaching from a lectern, while pointing to a small church with her left hand (see plate 2). This iconography is unusual: although Audrey is often represented in art as a crowned abbess holding a staff or crosier and sometimes a book, she is not usually associated with scenes of public reading.[40] By contrast, the Campsey illumination has a meaning related to the text it introduces: there seems to be a deliberate visual confusion between the saintly abbess and foundress, (pointing to her foundation at Ely as she reads) and the female author, another figure of female authority

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[38] As Russell indicates, Isabella of Arundel is singled out by the Campsey manuscript as patron of the Life of Edmund in an unusually extended opening rubric. Although Marie is named as the author of the life of Audrey, the manuscript suppresses the identification of Clemence of Barking as author of the life of St Catherine as well as that of the nun of Barking as author of the life of Edward the Confessor. Given the local connections of the manuscript, it is possible that the nuns at Campsey would have been aware of the authorship of these texts although this clearly cannot be taken for granted.

[39] Marie may have been connected with the nunnery of Chatteris (near Ely) or possibly Barking. McCash has recently argued that the author may be Marie de France (or at least the same Marie that wrote the *Espurgatoire*) in her article: '*La vie seinte Audree*: A Fourth Text by Marie de France?'. This argument has also been put by Mickel: *Marie de France*, pp. 13—23. Cf. *SLWLC*, p. 204; and *ANLB*, p. 264. For comparison of Marie with the author of the life of Edward the Confessor, see MacBain, 'Anglo-Norman Women Hagiographers', pp. 238—41.

[40] For instance, in the 10th-century Benedictional of St Æthelwold (London, BL, Additional 49598) the saint appears with a flowering branch in her left hand and a book in her right, her gaze trailing off to the left. Perhaps the closest image to the Campsey illumination is the representation of the miracle at St Abb's Head in the Octagon sculptures at Ely Cathedral. However, although the saint is depicted on an island surrounded by water, she is represented in a position of prayer, not with a book. See Blanton-Whetsell, '*Tota integra, tota incorrupta*', fig. 1, p. 246 and Stubbs, *The Acts of S. Awdrey*, plate 3.

who speaks from the text to the spiritual profit of her audience and the Church. In addition to this confusion of author and saint, it would also be possible (assuming that the manuscript was read aloud) to extend this visual identification further, to encompass the female reader who emulates either or both female figures in her oral delivery of the story. The inclusion of the lectern tantalisingly suggests that the public reading of this Life by a member of the Campsey community would have been seen in terms of the *imitatio* of both author and saint.[41]

Moreover, as part of this possible identification, the depiction of the saint on a rocky protuberance surrounded by water focuses on episodes from the Life that foreground her purity and sexual integrity in connection with the act of reading. On one level, the rocky headland on which the saint stands presumably represents St Abb's Head hill, where Audrey fled to escape the sexual advances of her second husband, king Egfrid. Once the saint was on the hill, legend has it that the sea rose miraculously to surround it, thereby preventing Egfrid from getting to his wife, and preserving her virginity. Audrey's retreat to St Abb's Head anticipates her later enclosure as a nun on the island of Ely, where she founds a church. It would therefore be fair to assume that both of these islands (St Abb's Head and Ely) are represented in this image, suggestively associating the virginity that Audrey preserves through her miraculous isolation on St Abb's Head hill and later enclosure at Ely with her roles as foundress and teacher.[42] The depiction of the saint reading further suggests that this association extends to Audrey's function in the Campsey manuscript as a posthumous textual exemplar. The visual equation of both book and church with Audrey's inviolate isolation in this image suggests that the saint's physical and spiritual integrity permeate the material objects associated with her, not least the book that relates the story of her life. This figuration of the saint might therefore suggest a similar equation of the virgin body and the edifying book to that seen in Osith's life, where the purity of body, life and text go hand-in-hand. That this purity might be communicated through an engagement with the text preserved in the Campsey collection is implicit in the fact that reading from the text would imply an alignment with Audrey as she is pictured here, an

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[41] Weston has explored in connection with early medieval hagiography how the construction of the saint as both a model and object of devotional longing by a female author for a female audience can redefine female desire in homoaffective/homosocial terms that, in turn, confirm community. One might see this process as being pictorially articulated in the miniature of Audrey (as well as being more generally reflected in the manuscript as a whole). See 'Elegiac Desire'.

[42] On the treatment of Audrey's (Æthelthryth's) inviolate body as a symbol of the integrity of the Ely monastery in the *Liber Eliensis* see Blanton-Whetsell, who draws suggestive parallels between textual and architectural depictions of Æthelthryth's isolation on her island. '*Tota integra, tota incorrupta*'.

alignment already suggested in the possible identification between author, reader and saint in this image.

4.1.5. Contesting the Feminine

This focus on female learning and pedagogy is all the more striking as it appears in the context of a renegotiation of certain kinds of female identity in the manuscript. Perhaps the most obvious example of this occurs in the promotion of heroines who escape – and sometimes explicitly reject – the conventions governing the representation of women in genres such as romance.[43] Many of the texts (as is often the case in hagiographic literature of this period) explicitly engage with and undermine romance conventions apparently in order to shore up their claim to generic superiority. As already pointed out, this is in evidence in the Life of St Catherine, who explicitly rejects the courtly adoration of women associated with the pagan emperor Maximian. Yet the engagement with models of femininity drawn from other vernacular genres also features in other texts, sometimes in conjunction with an appropriation or redefinition of the discourses that produce such constructions. In order to focus on the variety of ways in which female identity is (re-)negotiated in the collection, I will discuss just two examples: one from the *Vie sainte Osith* and the other from the *Vie seinte Modwenne*.

i. Osith: The Lady as Saint

The parallels between the Life of St Osith and romance have been noted by those commentators who have written about the Life; the section describing Osith's marital career in particular exhibits traits in common with romance.[44] What is striking about the text's similarities with romance in this part of the poem is, however, the way in which what might be termed 'courtly' motifs appear at moments of tension or violence, as preludes to or diversions from moments when the saint's virginity is under attack from her husband. This deployment of courtly conventions should be seen in the context of the text's self-conscious alignment with the *passio* of the virgin martyr. In the rubric introducing Osith's Life she is described – as is Foy – as a *virge e martire* and the outfit

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[43] On the hagiographic critique of courtly love, see Wogan-Browne, 'The Virgin's Tale', Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, pp. 43—61.

[44] In the 1960s, Legge suggested that the interest of the text lay in its links with romance literature, citing the motifs of the deluded husband and the white hart as two ways in which the narrative demonstrates romance tendencies. Russell, supporting the argument for the poem's 'courtly' elements, also points to traits which the poem has in common with the *chanson de geste*. Making a rather different argument, Wogan-Browne is more inclined to see those elements of dramatic comedy that establish links between romance texts such as *Cligès* and the Life of St Osith (as well as other female saints' lives) as part of a quintessentially hagiographic style. See *ANLB*, pp. 259—61; Russell, 'The Secularisation of Hagiography'; and *SLWLC*, esp. pp. 325—29.

she wears in her portrait seems to associate her with the only other virgin martyr visually represented in the collection: St Catherine of Alexandria (see Table 1 and plates 3 and 6). This is made all the more remarkable by the fact that Osith's career as a saint more closely resembles that of Audrey, who also rejected marriage and became a nun, yet the representation of these two women in the initials seems to emphasise different aspects of their spiritual lives (cf. plate 2). It has now become something of a commonplace that the virgin challenges the foundation of the social network by refusing to participate in the systems in which women are exchanged and disposed of by men. Unlike virgin martyrs such as Foy and Catherine, however, Osith is a *virge e martire* after her marriage and the challenge that her status as a virgin martyr poses to the social system therefore appears within a domestic context rejected by many of her saintly counterparts.[45] The use of a courtly register is partly used to point up the distinction between Osith's status as a *dame* married to Siher and her identity as a virgin martyr. This register emerges most visibly in those passages where Osith's marriage appears as an instrument of her persecution as a suffering virgin, serving, on the one hand, to expose the violence which lies just beneath the rhetoric of secular romance and, on the other, to underline Osith's status as a virgin martyr over and above that of the wife.

As D. W. Russell points out, the interactions between Osith and her husband Siher are initially conducted (and described) in a manner more characteristic of romance than hagiography, only later deteriorating into violent confrontation.[46] The initial negotiations between Osith and Siher over the consummation of their marriage are rather more subtle – and more morally ambiguous – than the confrontations one finds in many saints' lives between virgin martyrs and their persecutors, or between married saints and their spouses. Osith initially contrives to avoid consummating her marriage neither by converting her husband nor by confronting him with her 'marriage' to another spouse; instead, the saint eloquently pleads with Siher for a respite from sexual congress while nonetheless implying that her consent may be won later on. Later, despite her husband's attempts at flattery (*losenger*) and his increasingly apparent frustration, Osith manages further to postpone sexual intercourse with him by using the rather unusual tactic of *giu e ris*. Although the interactions of Osith and Siher are described in terms that are not necessarily exclusively confined to romance texts, their

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[45] See Zatta's claim that this text rescripts the virgin martyr story as a contemporary tale of domestic conflict: 'The *Vie Seinte Osith*', pp. 381—6.
[46] Russell, 'The Secularisation of Hagiography', pp. 7—9.

behaviour (and the vocabulary used to describe it) evokes a courtly milieu that is not that of the average *passio*.

Even during the early stages of her marriage, however, this courtly demeanour does not entirely obscure the sexual violence that Osith's prevarication is designed to deflect. Osith's prayers indicate exactly what is at stake when her husband summons her so that she might do all that his heart could wish (*ke tant al quer puet desirer*); avoiding such euphemisms, the saint asks God in no uncertain terms to prevent her from being 'hunye a nuit ne violee'. Osith's prayers thus anticipate the conflict that is to come, introducing it in terms of a difference in how the same sexual act is to be viewed from alternative perspectives. Things come to a head on Siher's birthday when, amidst an atmosphere of celebration at court, the inebriated king calls his wife to him and tries to lie with her. The description of courtly festivities is in marked contrast to what follows, as Siher tries frantically to force himself upon a distraught and weeping Osith. Nevertheless, this transition does not mark a shift from a courtly mode to one of 'realism';[47] rather, the struggle between man and wife assumes the form of a virgin martyrdom in the bedroom. In a similar way to contemporary vernacular accounts of the persecutions of virgin martyrs, Osith's struggle juxtaposes the increasingly violent attacks to which she is subjected by the king with her prayers to God for aid and protection. There is a clear sense in which this is a conflict between a sexually voracious male authority and a divinely protected virgin (a conflict that is a staple of accounts of virgin martyrdom). This sense is enhanced by the fact that, during their struggle, Osith is described throughout as *seinte Osith* (never as a wife, as she has been previously in the poem) and Siher is only referred to as *li reis*.[48]

The outcome of Osith's prayer during her suffering is the appearance of a white deer which Siher decides to hunt, distracting him long enough for the saint to take the veil. The introduction of the motif of the hunt at this point has an important function in the poem. In addition to drawing the narrative back towards a mode of narration with romance (as well as hagiographic) associations,[49] the detailed description of the chase

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[47] Russell describes the physical struggle between Osith and her husband as being presented with a high degree of realism. 'The Secularisation of Hagiography', p. 9.

[48] Cf. Blanton-Whetsell's account of Audrey's (Æthelthryth's) escape from her husband in the *Liber Eliensis*, '*Tota integra, tota incorrupta*', pp. 240—49. Wogan-Browne points out that in the lives of forcibly betrothed and married insular virgin saints the pagan tyrant role can be filled by unwanted British husbands. *SLWLC*, p. 115. See also Zatta, 'The *Vie Seinte Osith*', pp. 381—6.

[49] In hagiography, one might think of Eustace, Gilles and Julian the Hospitaller. St Hubert, the patron saint of hunting acquires his association with the hunt in the 14th century, from episodes in the Life of Eustace. (For further examples see Delehaye, 'La Légende de saint Eustache', p. 10.) The Occitan *Chanson de sainte Foy* compares the early persecutions of Christian martyrs to the deer hunt (ll. 5—10). Of the numerous occurrences of this motif in romance texts, Chrétien de Troyes's *Erec et Enide* provides a good example. The use of the hunt as an allegory of amorous pursuit is far more common in romance than in hagiography.

also serves as a metaphor for the conflict that has just taken place. The king, the poem declares, is anxious to catch (*prendre*) the deer, which is whiter than any he has ever seen; despite going where no man has gone before in his pursuit of the beast, Siher loses sight of it and has to return home empty-handed, where he discovers that his wife has also escaped him by veiling herself as a nun. The appearance of the deer is thus a form of divine intervention that saves the saint from persecution by her husband and, at the same time, a 'courtly' rehearsal of a hagiographic struggle in which the virginity of the saint is under threat. The more usual association of the hunt in romance with amorous pursuit is therefore replaced with the threat of physical violation associated by the poem with a marital conflict of hagiographic proportions.

Although the Life of St Osith does not (as Catherine's does) explicitly take issue with courtly depictions of women, the poem's engagement with romance nonetheless frames a space in which Osith's identity as a virgin martyr can emerge in contrast to the position of the courtly wife. The contrast between registers that enables the substitution of sexual violence for the traditional connotations of the hunt in courtly literature highlights Osith's position as a virgin martyr, not as a lady of the court. Instead of suggesting that Osith is the object of romantic pursuit, the hunt rehearses her struggle to preserve her virginity in a way that portrays the saint as the hunted, yet elusive sexual prey of her husband.[50] Osith's classification as a *virge e martire* is thus facilitated by the poem's redefinition of the sexual economy of other vernacular genres, a redefinition that implicitly challenges the forms of femininity that this economy both posits and creates.

ii. Modwenna as New Eve

The Life of Modwenna is the longest of the texts in the manuscript; it is also a text that provides one of the most important and varied representations of female identity in the manuscript. The action of the poem is episodic as well as linear, being comprised of a long succession of miracles and wonders both before and after Modwenna's death. The form of the poem suggests that this Life may have been read out in sections, as the miracles often have their own prologues and epilogues, dividing the text up into a series of short narratives that could have been read individually or as part of a series. One such episode concerns a miraculous cure worked by the saint on a young boy in her care, a cure that implicitly reworks the biblical account of the fall. It should be noted that this is

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[50] Wogan-Browne points out that the Danish raiders who later kill Osith actualise a threat to the saint's life analogous to Siher's hunt for the stag (and her virginity), thus updating the conventions of the virgin martyr *passio*: *SLWLC*, p. 115—16.

not the only episode in which this biblical theme appears: the poem repeatedly returns to the story of the creation and fall of man. For instance, mention is made in the prologue of Adam's fall and salvation through Christ; the biblical story is also cited in Modwenna's sermon to the demonically possessed bishop Kevin outside the convent; it is used to describe the weakness of the flesh when a nun sees angels around Modwenna and cannot bear the great light; and it is invoked when Modwenna reprimands a disobedient nun. It is within this context that this miracle – which appears only in the Campsey version of the Life, and which is not based on the Latin source of the poem – should be considered.[51] Having been charged with the education and upbringing of king Denec's son, one day Modwenna finds the boy has fallen seriously ill. Concerned that he should eat to sustain himself, Modwenna asks him to taste some food, whereupon the boy claims that he could only eat an apple. Despite the fact that Modwenna knows there is no fruit to be had anywhere in the country, she informs her charge that he will have his desire (*desir*), God willing. In a long prayer to God, Modwenna then asks to be granted an apple, reflecting on how Adam forfeited his divine inheritance through the actions of his wife and how Christ redeemed this sin by taking on human form. The apple is miraculously produced once the prayer is over; Modwenna plucks the fruit and takes it to the sick boy, who, upon eating it, is miraculously cured.

This episode re-enacts the redemption of man that Modwenna mentions in her prayer, as the actions of the saint implicitly redeem Eve's role in the fall of humankind. Modwenna fulfils the boy's desire for the apple, yet, unlike Eve's temptation of Adam, the saint gives the apple to her male charge as proof of a relationship to God that subjects the saint to God's will, not as a departure from his law. This particular fulfilment of human desire therefore has an altogether different effect to its catastrophic biblical counterpart, an effect that once again reverses the Old Testament model. For, unlike Adam, who in tasting the apple ingests his own mortality, the moribund child is restored to life through eating the fruit given to him by Modwenna. The miracle thus conveys the post-crucifixion, post-resurrection realignment of divine and human will through Modwenna's privileged relationship to God, yet it does so by implicitly reworking Eve's role in the original division of these wills. As a form of second Eve, Modwenna reverses the negative impact of Adam's temptation and, in so doing, suggests an alternative model of woman that opposes and reclaims the feminine figure who supposedly caused man's downfall.

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[51] This passage appears in ll. 4333—884.

4.1.6. Interpellating Community

I have argued that reading the texts in the Campsey manuscript alongside one another reveals a number of common themes, most notably, a pedagogical model in which women can be tutors as well as tutees. I would now briefly like to consider how the texts in the manuscript might encourage a view of community that corresponds both to this pedagogical theme and to the more general reworking of female identity seen in texts such as the *Vie seinte Osith* and the *Vie seinte Modwenne*. This consideration will return to some of the themes discussed in Chapter Three, where I suggested how interpellation might function in hagiographic texts as means of identifying with the narrative through one's participation in an imagined, discursively mediated community. The examples used in that chapter foregrounded forms of community that were either non-specific in their composition or predominantly male (while nonetheless claiming Christian universality), the latter being particularly apparent in the *Vie de seint Auban*, where epic community is implicitly reclaimed for hagiographic purposes. What I will consider in this final section on the Campsey manuscript is the extent to which the emphasis on relations between women and on female pedagogy might affect the reading of community in the manuscript: that is, community as both a feminine and a universally Christian collectivity.

In commenting on the texts in the Campsey collection, Dominica Legge memorably remarked that the nuns of that community would have had to endure being addressed as *seignurs* during their mealtime reading.[52] However, while it remains true that many of the texts in question use this form of address in their opening and closing passages, this is by no means the only figuration of community in these poems. I have mentioned how many of the female saints that appear in this collection are construed as female pedagogues, often explicitly addressing their teachings to other women. The depiction of community follows this model insofar as the recipients of the saints' teachings are often communities of women or women who form a part of a larger community. With regard more specifically to the interpellative constitution of community, however, there are a number of instances where women are collectively addressed by a (usually female) saint. Catherine's appeal to the *gentilz puceles* and *barunesses beles* in the crowd of spectators who have gathered to watch her martyrdom is one example of this. Yet by far the most important text in this respect is the *Vie seinte*

[52] *ANLB*, p. 261.

Modwenne, which contains a number of episodes in which the saint engages directly with the female communities in her protection.[53]

There are at least seven instances in the poem where Modwenna addresses women in direct speech to praise, help or admonish, some of which resemble short sermons. Equally frequent, however, are those passages where Modwenna addresses her nuns as a communal body, usually employing the collective noun *filles*. Although they appear in the context of a particular miracle or episode in Modwenna's Life, many of these passages could stand alone as didactic statements or sermons and would have been ripe with interpellative possibilities for the Campsey community. Modwenna's discourses not only address themselves to a collective body of (largely silent and unindividuated) nuns, but also pronounce upon matters that would have been at the heart of the spiritual life of a nunnery. Thus, the saint counsels her sisters on service to God and on the transience of the world; she speaks to them on good conduct; she lectures them on sin and the importance of repentance; she offers advice on faith in God and on poverty; she expounds on the acceptance of suffering in order to gain reward in heaven; and she discourses on not succumbing to temptation and on working communally to earn God's favour.[54]

Furthermore, when on her deathbed, the saint calls her ladies to her for some final advice. Again, it is easy to see how this address implies an intimate communication with the saint which nonetheless invites a more general audience of *filles* to see themselves as its recipients. Just before she dies, Modwenna asks her nuns to pray for her, reassuring them that God's judgement is good and that everyone will therefore get their just desserts in the end. The saint then finishes off with a rather ominous warning that the women prepare themselves for the day when they too will face judgement, a warning that – in being addressed to 'filies e mes amies' – implicitly extends to those dedicated *filies* and *amies* of the saint listening outside as well as inside the text (f. 207vb).[55]

The treatment of the female community in this poem – and perhaps most especially the role that women play as audiences with a direct relationship to the saint

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[53] This could be seen in the context of the poem's more general appeal to community. Russell notes that the end of the *Vie* would lend itself to communal performance: the epilogue to the Life of Modwenna is unusually expanded to include a liturgical sequence in Latin (comprising an antiphon, versicle and prayer) which would imply a shared participation in reciting the last section of this life. 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'.

[54] *Modwenna*, ed. by Baker and Bell, ll. 2221—96, 2881—912; 2945—76; 3439—78; 3585—616; 5009—32; 3241—84. ff. 173va—174ra, 180rb—180va etc.

[55] *Modwenna*, ed. by Baker and Bell, ll. 6755—96 (note that ll. 6757—80 are not reproduced in the version contained in the Campsey manuscript).

herself – suggests that the *Vie seinte Modwenne* would have offered a number of opportunities for a community of medieval nuns to (mis-)recognise themselves as participants in the hagiographic text. By seeing themselves reflected in a community of female addressees who attended to Modwenna's many pronouncements and pieces of advice, the Campsey nuns would have been able to adopt a position with regard to the text which echoed and reworked their situation outside it. As the *filies* addressed by the saint, these women would have been able to see their role as Christian auditors within the more specific context of the special relationship between Modwenna and her nuns.

Especially when seen in the broader context of female pedagogy in the collection, those episodes in the Lives of Catherine and Modwenna where the saint addresses a community designated as female go some way towards creating a sense of community that seems deliberately to include women. As I have argued, such speeches would have facilitated the dissolution of imaginative distinctions between female communities of listeners inside and outside the text. This would have been the case particularly in a situation where the text was being read aloud to a community of women by one of their number, as implied by the fourteenth-century notes to the manuscript which suggest it was used for mealtime reading.[56] It would nonetheless be misleading to claim that the image of community that emerges from the Campsey manuscript is exclusively female. As in the case of the manuscript's pedagogical theme, there is a crucial interweaving of male and female relationships: female community, like female pedagogy, is never particularised to the extent that it is separate. Rather, what the choice of texts in the collection suggests is an attempt to take seriously the claim to universality inherent in the notion of Christian community itself. Unlike many hagiographic texts, the thematic concerns of the narratives in the Campsey manuscript seem to draw attention to how women might be included in the universal Christian community that they promote.

What the manuscript therefore encourages its modern academic audience to appreciate is how women might be situated within the kind of Christian community that the collection aims both to constitute and to reinforce. Instead of assuming that female religious would have considered being addressed as *seignurs* somehow incongruous and inappropriate, this collection invites us to consider the ways in which female community might have recognised itself within such a collective term.[57] Despite its

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[56] see above, n. 10.

[57] Although not basing his argument on this piece of evidence alone, Russell counts the use of 'seignurs' as a mode of address in the lives of Osith, Foy and Modwenne as possible evidence against the production of this manuscript by the female community at Campsey. See 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'.

many addresses to women, the prologue to the *Vie seinte Modwenne* – like those in other texts in the manuscript – calls upon an audience of *seignurs*, suggesting that this textual community might be contiguous with that of the convent rather than opposed to it. This finds some justification in the text itself: early on in Modwenna's Life, the young saint listens to and takes example from the teachings of St Patrick who, the poem tells us, addresses his audience as *seigniurs* (f. 158ra).[58] Modwenna has no hesitation in applying Patrick's teaching to herself; she is in fact the only person mentioned in the text who actively responds to the holy man's preaching. The saint's example reinforces the sense that the nuns listening to the story – and to other texts in the collection which similarly address them as *seigniurs* – would not necessarily consider their interpellation as such as a barrier to their inclusion in the text's message. Indeed, responding to such an interpellative call would imply – in this case at least – both participation in a supposedly universal Christian teaching and emulation of the female saint. The Campsey collection – through its emphasis of women's roles both in pedagogical networks and in the Christian communities represented and created by hagiographic texts – may therefore give some impression of how women may have related to a universal model of community that often failed to include them explicitly. The forms of interpellation that underwrite women's inclusion in such a community are of course no less ideologically coercive than those described in Chapter Three; nevertheless, they do challenge modern scholars to consider what textual communities of this kind might tacitly *include* as well as exclude.

4.2. Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici Miscellaneous 74

The model of community that this early thirteenth-century manuscript seems to construct is substantially different from that of the Campsey collection. The Canonici manuscript contains a decasyllabic version of the *Vie de saint Alexis* which, as Meyer indicated some time ago, is executed in an original fashion from the Latin *Vita* and is therefore entirely independent of earlier twelfth-century versions of the poem. The second item in the collection is a lacunary copy of the *Poème moral* (a non-contemporary title given to the medieval work by Meyer), which notably relates the Lives of Moses the Black and Thaïs. *La Vie sainte Juliane* and *Eufroysine* follow this poem. The fifth text in the collection – the Life of Mary the Egyptian – is probably the oldest extant copy of the *T* version of this enormously popular vernacular story, although the text is some 200 lines shorter than the version in Paris, BN, fonds français

[58] *Modwenna*, ed. by Baker and Bell, l. 149.

23112.[59] The last two texts in the collection are *La Vie saint Andrier l'apostle* and *Li Ver del juïse* (a sermon on the theme of the Last Judgement).[60] Many of these texts are of northern provenance; the manuscript itself is most probably of Walloon origin.[61]

As I will suggest, the Canonici collection presents teaching and learning in a significantly different light from the Campsey manuscript. The examples set by many of the saints in the manuscript focus on sin and repentance (as in the Lives of Moses, Thaïs and Mary the Egyptian); other texts highlight the importance of renouncing the world as that which might compromise one's relationship to God and lead one into sin (Alexis, Euphrosine, Juliana and the *Ver*). Although, as we shall see, an educational programme is certainly not lacking in this collection, the pedagogical framework of the Canonici manuscript is far more closely associated with the recognition, judgement and punishment of sin than is the case with the Campsey collection. Thus, whereas the Campsey manuscript defines community in relation to (female) educational networks, community in the Canonici manuscript is more clearly influenced by the punitive agenda of the texts it contains, an agenda which implicitly addresses a penitential community united by its common rejection of worldly vice.

4.2.1. Geography and Time

Various aspects of the collection help to situate and define its construction of community; one such aspect is the temporal and geographical focus of its selection of texts. The concentration of Eastern saints and themes in the collection as well as on the early period of Christianity from which these saints and themes emerge is unmistakable. Alexis, Moses, Thaïs, Euphrosine, Mary the Egyptian and Andrew all have Eastern associations. Moreover, all of these saints are linked to early periods of the Christian era, either before or around the fifth century AD; no contemporary saints appear in the manuscript (see Table 2). The temporal and geographical distance of the subject matter of these texts is occasionally mentioned explicitly by the poems themselves. Thus, at the beginning of the Life of Euphrosine, an announcement is made that

> Nove chancon vos dimes de bele antiquitee
> ystore bone *et* dulce plaine de veritee
> Faite est dune pucele de grant nobilitee
> Dalisandre fut nee une riche citee
> (f. 87r)[62]

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[59] *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski, pp. 25—6.
[60] Full details of the format and contents of the manuscript are given in Table 3 and Appendix 1.
[61] See, for example, Wilmotte, *Études*, pp. 52, 216; *Poème*, ed. by Bayot, p. xciv.
[62] *Euphrosine*, ed. by Hill, ll. 1—4.

The rhyming of *antiquitee* and *veritee* in the couplet that begins the poem is no accident: the suggestion here is that the antique subject matter of the poem guarantees its truth, that its distance in time and place somehow vouches for its spiritual vintage.

This concern with antiquity possibly explains why a considerable proportion of texts in the manuscript are written in forms that are themselves self-consciously archaic. Over 6000 verses of poetry in the collection are either decasyllabic or alexandrine laisses, while under 3600 have an octosyllabic form (see Table 3). The use of such poetic forms aligns these texts with the *chanson de geste*, implicitly laying claim to the age and traditional status that epic poetry also supposedly asserts.[63] It is worth noting in this respect that, in the Canonici manuscript, those texts that use decasyllables or alexandrines sometimes stress their connections to oral poetic forms in ways that implicitly underline the connections between epic and hagiography. For example, the decasyllabic Life of Alexis begins by asking its audience if it pleases them to 'aescolteir. don saint ho*m*me la geste.' (f. 1r).[64] Euphrosine's Life also mentions the fact that it is a *nove chancon* twice in its first eleven lines, claiming an antiquity that is resolutely new yet nonetheless grounded in a subject matter and forms of expression that are ostensibly much older.[65] Indeed, after the saint's death, we are told that her father 'delageste ala virgene i at fait escriture | q*ui* mais niert obliee ta*n*t ke li siecle dure', suggesting that ancient subject matter and written text are traditionally conjoined in the recounting of the *geste* that we have just heard (f. 108r).[66]

In line with the manuscript's focus on the East and on the early Christian period, a consistent thread of eremitic and/or monastic piety runs through many of the texts. References to hermits and monks abound.[67] Moses becomes a monk and conducts himself in such a way that 'onkes plus sainte vie hermites ne mena' (f. 24r).[68] Thaïs effectively becomes a hermit by agreeing to be shut in a cave for three years, a reading that the poem seems to encourage by representing the saint's conversion and subsequent

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[63] The close formal and stylistic relationship between hagiography and epic poetry in the 'French' tradition is explored by Zaal: *'A Lei francesca'*, esp. pp. 61—152. On hagiography and epic more generally, see Ch. 3.3.1—3.3.2. On the use of alexandrines in Old French hagiography, see Brunel-Lobrichon *et al.*, 'L'Hagiographie de langue française', pp. 312—16.

[64] *Alexis*, ed. by Stebbins, l. 1. Other versions of the *Vie de saint Alexis* (notably *S* and *M*) are also composed in decasyllables. See *Alexis*, ed. by Elliott, pp. 50—67; 93—150 (*S*); and 151—97 (*M*).

[65] The reference to the text as a *chanson* is a feature of saints' lives in Old French and Occitan prior to the 12th century; these texts were probably destined for musical presentation as part of the liturgy (possibly after the liturgical lessons in Latin). The similarity between the musical schema of saints' lives and that of *chansons de geste* is noted by Zaal, *'A Lei francesca'*, pp. 130—36. See also Chailley, *Études musicales*, p. 23 (cited by Zaal in n. 1, p. 136). On the usage in this version of *Euphrosine*, see McCulloch, 'Saint Euphrosine', esp. pp. 172—77.

[66] *Euphrosine*, ed. by Hill, ll. 1231—32.

[67] On eremitism as a theme that emerges in 12th -century saints' lives in response to disillusionment with institutionalised (especially monastic) religion, see Johnson and Cazelles, *Le Vain Siècle*, pp. 58—83.

[68] *Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, str. 48.

isolation alongside the claim that those who wish to be cleansed of all sin embrace harsher forms of penitence, just like 'li bon ho*m*me. qui devinrent hermite.' and the 'sainz moines degypte.' (f. 40r).[69] Euphrosine is similarly cut off from the world when she becomes a monk and is separated from the rest of the order, her example eventually persuading her father to follow suit. Marie becomes a hermit and is then found by a monk – Zozimas – who communicates her story after her death. Finally, the *Ver del juïse* claims to have its origins in Egypt, where it was ostensibly composed by a divinely inspired hermit:

> uns angles laportat. de la terre degyptie.
> faite fut en egipte. la u d*eu*s fut nurriz.
> par la boche dun angle. lafist uns sainz hermiz.
> endis *et* set ans ke unkes pain ne vit.
> Ne ne maniat de char. *et* si ne biut de vin.
> Mais de laglore d*e*u fut totens raempliz
> (f. 131r—131v)[70]

The implication here and elsewhere in the manuscript is that the East has a temporal, physical and spiritual proximity to Christ to which the Christian subjects addressed by the collection must attempt to return. Given the significance of the East for much of Western Christendom in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (as well as for earlier periods), this is perhaps not especially surprising. The East was of course the setting for Christ's nativity, passion and resurrection and, throughout these two centuries, had been the object of crusades that recognised its spiritual and symbolic value (as well as its territorial importance) by seeking to recapture the biblical territories for the Christian West.[71] Indeed, in keeping with this focus on the East, vernacular saints' lives in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries frequently took early Christian (as opposed to contemporary) saints as their subject. Yet, what the *Ver* – along with poems such as the Life of Euphrosine – makes clear is that the privileged spiritual position to which Eastern saints and holymen can lay claim can be recuperated at least partially through narrative. It is in reading and learning from texts which have their origins in the spiritually fertile ground of a temporally as well as geographically distant Eastern piety that contemporary medieval readers will ostensibly recapture some of its 'authentic' Christian value.

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[69] *Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, str. 271.
[70] *Ver*, ed. by von Feilitzen, ll. 11—16; ed. by Rankka, ll. 11—16.
[71] Not counting the 1226 'crusade' of Louis VIII in Languedoc, seven crusades were embarked upon between 1096 and 1270. The eighth crusade ended with the recapture of Constantinople in 1282.

4.2.2. Repentance and Judgement

In addition to looking back in time to Eastern models, the manuscript also encourages its audience to look forward in time to the day of Judgement. The Last Judgement features in the volume as a more or less explicit point of reference for many of the saints' lives and also as the motivating force behind the sermon with which the manuscript ends. Furthermore, the importance of repentance, confession and penance as themes foregrounded in many of the texts in the collection can be seen both to inform and to emerge from this concern with future judgement. The text that most obviously exhibits this concern is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the *Ver del juïse* which concludes the collection.[72] The sermon begins by claiming that the message it contains has been sent by God 'por amendeir noz vies' (f. 131r).[73] This has been deemed necessary because of the erosion of many of the fundamental tenets of Christianity: the Christian brotherhood has failed to maintain its commitment to charity and faith, it has lost sight of (*perdue*) God's law and it has forgotten (*ramembret mie*) the great day of Judgement that awaits (f. 131r).[74] The poem goes on to describe what will happen on the day of Judgement, dwelling at some length on the pains of hell that await those souls who have served the body and the world before they have served God.

The *Ver* is the only text in the manuscript which does not narrate a saint's life of some kind; however, rather than view the *Ver* as a text that stands apart from the collection in this respect, it is more pertinent to consider how this sermon develops themes found in the other texts. It is, I think, no accident that the *Ver* appears at the end of the manuscript, for it acts on the one hand as a final warning of the consequences of ignoring the advice of the texts that precede it and, on the other, as a much cruder articulation of exactly what those consequences will be. In this sense, it is significant that the *Ver* follows the Life of St Andrew. The *Vie saint Andrier l'apostle* ends with the reminder that the poem's audience should pray that God preserve their bodies from sin in this life so that, come the day of Judgement, their souls may be saved in the next (f. 131r).[75] The *Ver* thus implicitly picks up where Andrew's Life leaves off, informing the Christian community of what they can expect from the judgement to which the epilogue of the preceding text refers.

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[72] Payen cites the poem as an example of attritionism, or 'la prédication par la crainte'; he suggests that repentance is encouraged indirectly, through the poem's insistence on judgement. *Le Motif du repentir*, pp. 490—92.
[73] *Ver*, ed. by von Feilitzen, l. l. 3; ed. by Rankka, l. l. 3.
[74] *Ver*, ed. by von Feilitzen, ll. 1—8; ed. by Rankka, ll. 1—8.
[75] *Andrew*, ed. by Baker, ll. 933—44.

More generally, the *Ver* develops a concern with the effects of sin and its adjudication that is expressed elsewhere in the collection. The notion of sin, true repentance and the judgement of both by God and his earthly representatives features significantly in the *Poème moral*, particularly in the sections of the text that relate to Thaïs. As can be seen from the rubrics to this section of the text, the poem's treatment of the Last Judgement appears in the context of a broader concern with confession and penance (Appendix 2, ff. 31r—40v).[76] At the beginning of the description of Paphnutius's visit to Thaïs and her subsequent conversion and repentance, the rubrics emphasise the human capacity for sin (f. 31v) and the importance of repentance in this life, before it ultimately becomes too late (f. 33v). These rubricated claims echo Paphnutius's words to Thaïs, framing the warnings he gives her that whoever dies while steeped in sin and unconfessed will be unceremoniously flung into the belly of hell without hope of redemption. While Paphnutius points out that man must repent while still alive 'de ci ken laltre secle sil le vult respitier | donc est tart damendise dont ne li puet aidier' he also stresses that redemption is always possible before the moment of death which will lead to future judgement (f. 34r).[77] The poem therefore goes on to underline through rubrication the significance of confession and genuine repentance that Paphnutius stresses before going on to focus attention on the crucial 'deriene hore' that decides the sinner's fate. Rubrics in this part of the poem assert that 'co*n*faitem*en*t om doit faire confession' (f. 34v) and 'ki entote sa vie nat fait se mal non ne*st* pas dignes ca*n*t il muert de vraie repentance' (f. 35v), eventually building up to a more descriptive turn of phrase in claiming that 'm*u*lt e*st* perillouse la deriene hore' (f. 36v). The shift from the imperative to the affirmative in these rubrics itself suggests that the moment of death and judgement is 'perillouse' precisely because it is then too late to take the action endorsed in the highlighted recommendations that precede it. Penance and confession must necessarily anticipate and attempt to influence a future moment in which the Christian subject is absolutely abandoned to the scrutiny of God's law.

The focus on sin, repentance and judgement towards the beginning of Thaïs's Life develops into a more practical reflection on the role of the earthly judge later in the *Poème*. The story of the repentant prostitute not only demonstrates how the hardened sinner can be redeemed in the eyes of God but also acts as a springboard for discussing the relationship between sinner and judge in a terrestrial setting that implicitly mirrors

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[76] As Payen has pointed out, the sections of the poem on Thaïs accord a particular importance to themes of repentance and confession. He nonetheless rightly argues that the poem combines contritionism and attritionism in more or less equal measure. *Le Motif du repentir*, pp. 500—505. See also Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, pp. 76—84.

[77] *Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, str. 184.

that of divine judgement. After Thaïs has been safely shut in her cave by Paphnutius, the poem proceeds to reflect at some length on the ideal characteristics of the (terrestrial) judge and his attitude towards sin and sinners. That this reflection demands no less that six rubrics gives some indication of the importance of this theme to the poem as a whole.[78] The suggestion here is that earthly judgement is linked to the divine in the same way as are processes of confession and penance. The earthly judge, like the earthly sinner, must look forward to the final moment of reckoning as that which should determine his role in the processes designed to prepare them – and others – for God's judgement.

Seen in relation to the Eastern theme of the manuscript, it is therefore possible to see how the collection situates itself between two specific points in biblical time. Contemporary medieval Christian subjects are, on the one hand, invited to look back to a period of early Christianity which has what seems to be a more direct connection to 'authentic' forms of piety while, on the other hand, being encouraged to anticipate an apocalyptic future in which death and judgement inevitably await. Each temporal pole requires the other: God's impending judgement demands the repentance and confession that are the result of following the examples set by earlier Christian saints and, conversely, the imperative to follow such examples springs from a concern with future judgement. Repentance is thus crucial to the time-frame of the collection: it negotiates between past, present and future by stressing their contiguity in the disciplining of subjects in the medieval present. More importantly, it is this penitential framework that implicitly defines the community to which the collection makes appeal. As I have suggested, the *Ver* plays a significant role in this respect by directly addressing the concern with sin, repentance and judgement seen in other texts to an audience beyond the pages of the collection itself. It is in this final text that the community is ultimately encouraged – even forced – to recognise itself as a penitential body caught within a judicial scheme like that outlined in more abstract terms in the Life of Thaïs. In the *Ver*, sin and spiritual neglect are what characterise 'us' as a community: God has sent this message to help correct 'our' lives (*nos vies*) because 'we' are the ones who are spiritually degenerate and lacking in faith. Moreover, 'we' have neglected God's law and forgotten the day of Judgement that awaits. The text addresses this community of sinners as subjects both of and to divine teaching, making sure that there can be no mistake about the individual as well as the collective responsibility for heeding this teaching in its use of the second person plural:

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[78] See Appendix 1, ff. 42v—46v (inclusive).

Or vos mande del ciel sainte virge marie
Se vos bien entendeiz ceste raison saintisme
Corone en porterez devant deu al iuise
Ci comence de deu teil raisons a venir
Se vos bien lentendeiz sen avreiz paradis
Corone en porterez devant deu al iuis
Et deu le vos otroit par la sue mercit
(f. 131v)[79]

In this game of spiritual stick-and-carrot, the community of sinners thus finds itself addressed by the Virgin Mary, who promises them heavenly rewards in return for spiritual reform. By slipping from the first to the second person (from *nos* to *vos*) the text creates a situation in which 'we' the community hear ourselves addressed directly by a spiritual authority who speaks through the text. Furthermore, 'you' singular here implicitly shades into 'you' plural: the Virgin not only speaks to the community at large but also seems to address 'you' the listener more personally. The fact that individual and communal bodies are here linguistically confused suggests that to recognise oneself as the addressee of the Virgin's message is also to recognise oneself in the sinful community to which the text makes its initial appeal (and vice versa). Perhaps more importantly, both communal and individual addressees are linguistically and ideologically subject of and to the text's divine message, a subject-position that confers identity on them even as it calls them into being.

That this community is in many ways that of the collection as a whole is suggested by the *Ver*'s appeal that its audience attend to the *raison saintisme* of the text with a view to atoning for their sins and gaining heavenly reward. The collection's insistence that contemporary Christians should strive towards the spiritual purity of an earlier age, its focus on sin and judgement more generally, along with its suggestion that texts might be instrumental in connecting the Christian community to its penitential roots, all seem to strike a chord with the way the *Ver* interpellates its audience. It is to this community of sinners seeking redemption, a community both judging and being judged, to which the *Ver* both addresses its pleas and also, crucially, gives voice.

4.2.3. Community and the Flesh

The disciplining of the community as a penitential body involves considering the flesh as a possible source of spiritual corruption, an attitude that deploys concepts of femininity in ways quite different from the Campsey manuscript. If the Campsey collection privileges a peculiarly female brand of pedagogical example, the educational

[79] *Ver*, ed. by von Feilitzen, ll. 17—23; ed. by Rankka, ll. 17—23.

value of the Canonici texts more often relies on the transcendence – or the denigration – of the body and its sexual or gendered significance. This is not to say that gender is insignificant in the Canonici collection; on the contrary, although sex and gender are deployed very differently in this manuscript, they are often absolutely central to the collection and its didactic focus. What this means, however, is that, although women are presented as examples, they serve less as models for women than as illustrations of how the pernicious qualities of (female) sexuality and gender difference can be overcome. Rather than demonstrating how a universalising Christian discourse might apply particularly to women (as I have argued the Campsey collection does), the Canonici manuscript instead suggests that, in this respect, the universal is arrived at at the expense of the particular: the purest experience of Christian truth requires the erasure of sexual and social specificity.[80]

There are a number of facets to this treatment of gender and sexuality in the collection, many of which focus on the body as an object to be purged or transformed. The physical transmutation of the body and its sexual significance is clearly a major theme in the Lives of Euphrosine, Alexis and Mary. Euphrosine's physical beauty – although clearly intended to connote her spiritual purity – poses a problem throughout her varied career of service to God. The saint is, we are told, admired from an early age as an unrivalled beauty in her native land (f. 89r) and it is this, along with the likelihood of her considerable inheritance, that inspires the unwanted attentions of the saint's suitors.[81] As Euphrosine herself is only too aware, the spiritual value of her virginity resides in her withdrawal of her body from social and sexual networks; for, as she puts it, 'ia virgene *et* uxor ne seront dun t*er*ral' (f. 90r).[82] As seen in Chapter Two, this rather familiar hagiographic dilemma nonetheless translates into a rather less common (although not entirely unique) transformation of Euphrosine's gender when, in the interests of avoiding any forced participation in marriage, she masquerades first as a knight and then as a monk. As argued in Section 2.3.3., her transvestism overwrites and symbolically articulates a transformation that has already taken place in which the saint's gender is partially obscured by her voluntary exclusion from social and sexual networks. However, as Simon Gaunt has pointed out, Euphrosine's entry into the monastery once again poses the problem of sexual desire, this time in a queer setting, by

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[80] This is a position that has a long history in the Christian Church. It would certainly resonate with Paul's views on Christian communion. Badiou's recent book on St Paul deals with the question of universalism and the transcendence of particularism in Pauline thought with reference to gender specificity. See *Saint Paul*, pp. 105—13.

[81] *Euphrosine*, ed. by Hill, ll. 131—33.

[82] *Euphrosine*, ed. by Hill, l. 180.

making her the object of the lustful glances of her fellow brothers.[83] Euphrosine's physical beauty thus once again provokes improper forms of sexual desire that threaten to draw the ambiguously gendered body of the virgin back into a sexual economy to which it is unsuited. The solution is in this case to isolate her further from social intercourse, making her to all intents and purposes a hermit within the monastic community to which she belongs.

What the Life of Euphrosine therefore represents is a process whereby the gender-free spirituality of the pure saintly body is revealed through a series of displacements that erase all traces of its social and sexual meaning. The various layers of the saint's gender and sexuality as these might be construed in different social and sexual contexts are gradually peeled away until all that is left is a spiritual residue that is without sexualised or gendered significance. Read from this perspective, the final address to the saint seems to assert a new, excoriated spiritual identity. For, although the saint is here associated with her roles as 'dame, Deu espose et amie', this reasserts the unavailability of the (now safely dead) saint's body for inclusion in the sexual economies she eschewed in life. What might, on the surface, appear to be a reassertion of the saint's femininity (and, indeed, might still be construed as such) is therefore also a reassertion of an alternative form of gender that escapes the human networks that would give it intelligibility in non-spiritual contexts.

Mary of Egypt's body, as seen in Chapter Three, is similarly subject to a form of metamorphosis that redefines the meaning of her sexual being. Unlike Euphrosine, Mary is of course all too involved in sexual economy at the beginning of her life; her involvement quite literally makes sex into an economic (and pleasurable) pursuit. The price that Mary has to pay for this is exacted upon the body in a way that attempts to rework the sexual significance of her formerly sinful physicality, redescribing Mary's beautiful white body in terms that blacken, brutalise and burn its loveliest features. As this would suggest, the saint's sexuality is a problem to be overcome in this respect, forcing her to mortify the body in ways designed to erase its iniquitous sexuality. As argued in the previous chapter, this process of physical *remaniement* nonetheless retains a residual attachment to that which it seeks to efface, inscribing what is considered to be a purified desire for the saint as signifier (rather than prostitute) that reasserts as well as reworks earlier articulations of desire for the saint.

The transformation of the body as a means of signifying its exclusion from sex/gender systems is not restricted to female saints in this manuscript. Useful

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[83] Gaunt, 'Straight Minds/"Queer" Wishes'.

comparison can be made in this respect with the Life of Alexis who, although not subject to the same levels of radical physical transformation as Euphrosine and Marie, nonetheless undergoes a similarly meaningful transformation of the body. In the version of the Life in the Canonici collection, Alexis offers his body and soul to God in a manner not unlike that of virgins such as Euphrosine.[84] While still a child, Alexis vows to remain chaste as a gesture of service and devotion to God, thereby offering his body in sacrifice (*sacrefise*) to his chosen Lord (f. 2v).[85] This gift is later reaffirmed through the saint's humiliation of his body, which involves a series of vigils, fasts and corporal punishment that leaves Alexis's face unrecognisably dark and discoloured (f. 5r).[86] This metamorphosis of the saint's flesh is also mentioned in other versions of the poem; however, this text is possibly more emphatic in its attention to the saint's transformation both before and after Alexis's encounter with his father's servants.[87] Moreover, in the conclusion of the poem, the saint's blackened flesh becomes a source of blinding light when his head is uncovered by his father, Eufemien and 'la chiere de lui lor rent si gra*n*t clarteit | ke soit angeles del ciel usoloz enesteit.' (f. 13v).[88] The physical mark of the saint's sanctity – of the devotion to God that has led him to offer his body in the first place – therefore comes to be associated both with the blackness of mortification that connotes his social 'invisibility' as well as the brightness of spiritual illumination that this invisibility permits.

Given this insistence on the transformation of Alexis's body as, on the one hand, a physical articulation of his altered relationship to social and sexual economy and, on the other hand, as a sign of spiritual enlightenment, it is worth noting the connection suggested between this text (albeit in different versions) and the Life of Mary the Egyptian in at least two other medieval manuscript collections. In both Paris, BN, fonds français 19525 and Manchester, John Rylands, MS French 6, versions of the Lives of Alexis and Mary of Egypt again appear together: in the Paris manuscript, these texts are even placed alongside one another as the fourth and fifth articles in the collection.[89] However, this comparison also draws out a fundamental difference in the way the transformation of the sexual body operates in these two texts. Apart from the fact that

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[84] On other similarities between these two Lives in the Canonici manuscript, see McCulloch, 'Saint Euphrosine'.
[85] *Alexis*, ed. by Stebbins, ll. 88—92 and 98—102.
[86] *Alexis*, ed. by Stebbins, ll. 255—59.
[87] See *Alexis*, ed. by Stebbins, ll. 275—79.
[88] *Alexis*, ed. by Stebbins, ll. 739—41 (ll. 740—41).
[89] In the Manchester manuscript, the texts appear as articles 6 and 8. It should be noted that the Life of Mary the Egyptian in this manuscript is fragmentary, comprising only the 1st 34 laisses and two verses from the beginning of the 35th. The text resembles, but is not identical to the version in the Paris manuscript. See Rankka's description of the manuscript contents for both collections: *Ver*, ed. by Rankka, pp. 39—43.

Mary is a repentant harlot and Alexis flees even marital sex for love of God, there is a marked difference in the way that each saintly body is treated after death. Whereas Mary's body is safely buried in a ceremony involving only Zozimas and a divinely inspired lion, Alexis becomes the object of intensely public veneration; whereas the body of the female penitent disappears from view, that of Alexis becomes visible for the first time as that of a man of God. The point to be made here draws on a claim made some time ago by others: namely, that the female saint has to transcend her physicality and her sexuality in a way that is not usually paralleled by her male counterparts.[90] In this case, the suppression of Mary's dangerous sexuality involves not only extreme forms of intensely physical penitence that considerably outdo those of Alexis, but also the disappearance of all physical traces of the saint. The purpose of reading these two texts in counterpoint nonetheless seems to be to suggest that the female saint's transcendence of the flesh is a more extreme form of the *same* renunciation of the body undergone by saints like Alexis. Thus, even as the specificity of the female sexual body is asserted through an amplification of its potentially noxious effects and the punishments designed to atone for those effects, the collection seems to mitigate the particularity of this process as an example of peculiarly female piety.

The sense in which the feminine is used to represent an imperative to reject the body (and all that it represents) that applies to men and women alike is similarly evinced by the parallels to be drawn between the bodily transformation of Moses and that of Mary. Although the physical change induced in Moses is not directly related to his repudiation of the *sexual* body, it nonetheless bears a number of striking similarities to the asceticism of both Alexis and Mary, especially the latter. Moses' conversion and his repentance for the sins he committed in his former life are expressed directly through the body, articulating a purging of sin that is also a purging of the flesh that embodies it:

> Cant moyses ver deu. ot savie turneie.
> Ilh avoit si cum moines. vestue cote leie.
> Ne manioit mie mut de salmon apevreie.
> Ne ne li criut engros. li colz ne laventreie.
> Locuir navoit il mie. deliet *et*roselant.
> Ne naloit pas ses ventres par devant luj crola*n*t.
> hom ne soloit ia mie. Gras devenir iunant.
> Mais or nest pas mervelle. li secles vait muant.
> Anz quil devenist moines. sastoit il gros *et* Gras.
> Mais ne demorat guaires. se fut maigres *et* las.
> les pechiez kavoit faiz. ceaz noblioit il pas.
> Beaz deus cu*m* tost samende. de cuj tu mercit as.

[90] See, for example, Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 185—198; and Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, pp. 62—86.

> **P**uis fist un habitacle utoz iors demora.
> onkes plus sainte vie. hermites ne mena.
> ce ke il avoit fait nule. ore noblia.
> Segurs soit quisamendet ke m*er*cit trovera.
> (f. 24r)[91]

This passage clearly expresses the implication of the transformed body in Moses' spiritual development: his conversion is expressed in his simple clothing, his eremitic lifestyle and the fasting that causes his previously ample figure to waste away. When compared to Mary's physical disintegration in the desert, Moses' life as a skinny hermit seems rather lacking in religious zeal (see Appendix 3, Extracts A and B); yet crucial elements of Mary's penitence are reproduced in those of the repentant brigand. Like Mary, Moses' deliberate neglect of the body accompanies both his reflection on past sins and his choice of a new life of physical hardship which he hopes will atone for these misdemeanours. Thus, like the transformation of Alexis's appearance, that of Moses suggests a correlation between Mary's mortification of the flesh and less extreme forms of physical penance found in other saints' lives. Once again, the female saint's abjection seems to be an extreme form of a more generalised physical punishment that finds its consummation – but not unique expression – in the Life of the repentant harlot.

4.2.4. Misogyny

There is, then, a sense in which the body, as the last vestige that links the subject to the physical world, must be overcome by all: saints and sinners alike. Female figures – because of the sexual overdetermination of their femininity – are used to represent this transcendence in more extreme, more explicitly sexualised form. In the Canonici collection, this seems to have less to do with demonstrating how Christian religious prescriptions apply to and include women than it does with a representational policy that uses female figures to depict amplified forms of penitential practice that can be applied (in somewhat watered down form) to men. It is indeed rather telling that most of the female figures represented in this manuscript provide models that speak most directly to men who play a part in their spiritual careers or who are enjoined by their religious calling to compose vernacular versions of their Lives. Thus, Euphrosine becomes after her death a model and intercessor for an exclusively male monastic community, a community which eventually extends both to her father and to the male poet who writes her Life. Mary is similarly used as a model for monks on account of her relationship to Zozimas. Even what seem to be comments specifically applicable to

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[91] *Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, str. 45—49.

women in the Life of Thaïs sit rather awkwardly alongside rubrics to the poem that emphasise the significance of these teachings for men (as a generic, but also perhaps as a gendered group).[92]

The flip side of this attitude towards the feminine in the collection is an anxiety over the female body as a symbol of physicality and difference that must be overcome.[93] As I have noted, this is clearly in evidence in the Lives of saints such as Mary and Thaïs, where sanctity is earned at the expense of sexually sinful (and sexually desirable) female flesh; it also more subtly informs Euphrosine's rejection of sexualised feminine identity. In this respect, it is worth considering the eradication and denigration of female physicality in the Lives of these saints alongside another feature of the manuscript: reflections on beauty and on the vanity of women that surface at least twice in texts in the collection. It would, in many ways, be all too easy to dismiss the misogyny of these reflections as a gratuitous denigration of women (which of course on one level it inevitably is). Nonetheless, misogyny here forms an important part of the discourse on the body and on gender in the manuscript, speaking to an anxiety over the deployment of the (female) body and its place within Christian discourse.

The attitudes of these texts towards female vanity are relatively unambiguous, depicting it as an abuse of the body that endangers the soul. Occasionally, discussions of the pernicious effects of vanity are addressed specifically to women. Thus, at the beginning of the Life of Thaïs, the text claims that the saint is an example for women and addresses the ladies of the supposed audience rather abruptly, suggesting that if they want to avoid going to hell they should listen up:

> Ki des paines dinfer. seit alkes sermoneir
> Il puet les desvoiez. avoie ratuner
> Si cu*m* ie vo vulh dire. si voleiz esculteir
> Dames entendeiz i. ie vul avos parleir
> Dire vulh dune da*m*me. q*ui* fut de g*ra*nt beateit.
> Beateit aiment mut da*m*mes. *et* mut lor vie*n*t e*n* gre*t*
> Mais cil q*ui* lo coviene. des beles dames seit
> Bien seit que mut font choses ke no*st*re sire heit
> Se beateiz truevet cuer. vain *et* delegerie
> Tant li fait plus penseir. dorguilh *et* defolie
> Tost puet estre engeniez. q*ui* enbeateit safie
> Beateiz trespasset tost. ui est demai*n* nirt mie

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[92] On monastic reception of legends that focus on female asceticism and repentance, see Ward, *Harlots of the Desert*, pp. 102—9. Cf. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 212—28; and Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, p. 150. On friars and female saints, see Coakley, 'Friars, Sanctity and Gender'.

[93] On the relationship between female sanctity and misogyny see R. H. Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny*, esp. pp. 89— 91; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre*, pp. 180—233 (esp. pp. 185—98); and Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, pp. 62—86. Schulenburg mentions the fine line between female sanctity and deviance in *Forgetful of Their Sex*, pp. 1—14; 127—75; 409.

(f. 28v)[94]

Despite the fact that women here seem to be the intended addressees of an orally delivered sermon, this is juxtaposed with a more general tendency to speak *about* rather than *to* them. Although the poet claims that he wishes to speak 'avos' – to 'you' women – two lines later, he has slipped into the third person, expounding upon how women are seduced by beauty and do all kinds of things that annoy 'our' (*nostre*) Lord. Furthermore, the last four lines of the quotation seem to move away from a specific criticism of women to more general pronouncements on vanity, lechery, pride and folly, using pronouns such as *qui* and *li* that could apply to either sex. This reflects a more general tendency in the poem to use the sinfulness of women as a means of discussing sin in a less gender specific way. This transition is neatly expressed in the second rubric, where the initial claim that this is an exemplary tale for vain women is turned on its head by the assertion that 'mult e*st* p*er*illouse chose de bealteit *et* [...] m*u*lt est folz li hom ki seit ke li anemis est fel *et* si ne se vult de lui partir' (f. 29v). Beauty thus appears to be equally as dangerous for the *folz hom* who falls for the devil's seductions as it is for the women who are prey to it. Although this is presented as a story about a *damme* who is condemned on account of her beauty and saved by a *sainz om* (f. 29r),[95] this relationship therefore often signifies in far less literal and non sexually specific ways. As later rubrication in the story suggests, this is both a tale about the relationship between Thaïs and Paphnutius, meretricious woman and holy man, and also a story that deals more generally with the connection between sinner and judge. References to women as a gendered group in fact only appear in the rubric that introduces the Life; after this, the various lessons of the story are unambiguously related to an audience of men (Appendix 2, ff. 28v—51r).

Misogyny therefore appears to be part of more general condemnation of sin in the manuscript, a condemnation that forms the very basis of the penitential community that the manuscript ostensibly interpellates. As I have argued, femininity is used to represent a weakness to seduction that potentially applies to men and women alike.[96] More importantly, the recognition (and abjection) of precisely this 'feminine' susceptibility to sin and temptation gives form to the community. It is by seeing itself as both sinful and repentant, as a transgressor and subject of God's law that the community and its members are ultimately given ideological and textual definition in this

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[94] *Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, str. 108—9.
[95] *Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, str. 120.
[96] Another instance of this appears in the *Ver* (ll. 24—46), where women are presented as figures of sinful *human* excess.

collection. Because the community – as a body of repentant sinners explicitly addressed by texts such as the *Ver* – is conceptualised within a disciplinary framework, its coherence is guaranteed by the repudiation of sexualised, sinful and often feminised flesh. The community with which the Canonici collection encourages its readers and listeners to identify is a community united in the knowledge that it will be judged on its attachment to the body either as an embodiment of worldly sin and corruption or as a mark of abstinence and spiritual discipline. This community, unlike that instantiated by the Campsey manuscript, therefore rejects rather than includes sexual difference, performing what Judith Butler might describe as a form of 'constitutive exclusion'.[97] This is nonetheless an exclusion that returns to haunt the community, plaguing it at every turn with the spectre of its own sin. For, if the function of the collection as the focus of community is to expose the tension between the condemnation of sin and the acceptance of divine judgement, between feminine excess and its subordination, this is a tension that cannot – and must not – be resolved.

4.3. Paris, Arsenal 3516

With regard to the interpellative possibilities of certain combinations of texts, instructive comparison can be made with the conceptualisation of community in larger, more diverse collections. One such collection is Paris, Arsenal 3516: a thirteenth-century manuscript comprising a wide range of texts including saints' lives, *lais*, chronicles, bestiaries, lapidaries and other scientific works. Although the collection has been considered a miscellany, Claudia Guggenbühl has recently demonstrated that the manuscript has a clear, overarching compositional scheme. The collection is obviously put together quite carefully and, as she points out, many of the texts have been adapted or entirely rewritten for this manuscript, a fact that leads Guggenbühl to argue that the collection is the work of a single *remanieur* (possibly Robert de Blois).[98] Unlike Guggenbühl, I see no reason why the manuscript could not have been worked on by more than one *remanieur*; however, as her work suggests, the collection does demonstrate a remarkable clarity of vision according to which texts have been adapted to the requirements of this particular commission.[99]

The nature of the texts included in the manuscript suggests that this collection is no less concerned to situate community than either the Campsey or Canonici

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[97] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, pp. 1—4.
[98] Guggenbühl, *Recherches*, esp. pp. xxv—xxvi and 334—42. For her argument concerning Robert de Blois see pp. 261—67.
[99] See Table 4 and Appendix 1.

manuscripts. The Arsenal collection contains sections on religious history and on the natural and social worlds that speak to an effort to locate the reader or listener in a multi-layered yet nonetheless coherent textual environment that reflects and transforms the manuscript's metatextual surroundings. More specifically, the collection contains instances of interpellation such as those mentioned in connection with the Campsey and Canonici manuscripts. For instance, the saints' lives in the first section contain the usual appeals to the audience found in much vernacular hagiography. Some of these texts – such as the Lives of Andrew, Moses, Thaïs, Mary of Egypt, Juliana and Catherine of Alexandria – are included in similar versions in the manuscripts just examined; the interpellative function of these texts has already been mentioned.

Taking an example from a Life not found in the other collections, then, the end of the *Vie du Pape saint Grégoire* includes a traditional exhortation to prayer that interpellates the audience as a community of Christian sinners:

> **P**roions p*or* deu n*ost*re segn*or*
> Q*ue* p*ar* sa g*r*ace *et* p*ar* samor
> Nos laist iceles oevres faire
> Q*ue* a bone fin puisson t*r*aire
> De nos pechies soions delivre
> *Et* nos face en sa gloire vivre
> (f. 107vb)[100]

In addition to interpellating the poem's audience as a community united in prayer, the poem thus constructs that community as a penitential community much like that seen in the Canonici manuscript. In relation to this particular Life, the contritional role that the members of the audience are encouraged to adopt aligns them with the saint himself, as a sinner who has not only been pardoned by God, but who has also achieved sanctity on account of the hardships he undertook in order to repent. The audience is thus interpellated by a collective pronoun that forms the community as such and, in so doing, engages it in the work of repentance common to both saint and community. As is common in such exhortations to prayer, this interpellation frames the invocation of God within the larger context of the Christian community's anticipation of the day of Judgement. As well as suggesting an alignment between the saint and the community that prays to God, this prayer might thus also relate the community it interpellates to the salvation history that orders this section of the manuscript as a whole.

As I will argue, such instances of interpellation can be seen as part of a broader effort ideologically to situate subjects and communities, an effort that is not confined to

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[100] See *Gregory*, ed. by Sol, A2, ll. 2685—90.

individual texts or sections of the collection. Other textual evidence in the manuscript suggests that a concern with establishing a place for humanity within a wider environment is at the heart of the manuscript's organisation. Yet the sheer size and diversity of the collection raises the question of how exactly community is to be conceived on a more local level in this context: in other words, how far it is possible to speak of 'community' in a collection of such proportions? This question is intimately concerned with the relationship between the universal and the particular that informs the textual selections of the other manuscripts discussed in this chapter, a relationship that – as seen in Chapter Three – is also manifested in the representation of community in saints' lives more generally. The Arsenal manuscript thus provides a means of thinking about the nature of community within Christian narrative contexts such as those I have discussed while, at the same time, enabling a reflection on its possible conceptual limits.

Focusing for a moment on the manuscript itself, Arsenal 3516 is a carefully organised collection that divides thematically into three main sections. The first section contains religious works (including nineteen saints' lives), the second comprises scientific – or pseudo-scientific – texts, and the third contains a range of primarily non-religious works such as *lais*, chronicles and romances. The first section of the manuscript follows the plan of Christian salvation, covering the history of humanity from the creation of the universe to the end of the world and the Last Judgement. The first part of this section contains a carefully reworked selection of thirteenth-century canonical and apocryphal stories that give an account of the role of Old Testament figures such as Adam, Noah and Moses, relate the lives of Jesus and the Virgin, and finally tell of Christ's death and the eventual demise of his mother. These stories are taken from the *Bible anonyme*, *La Passion des jongleurs* and the Bible by Herman de Valenciennes; the precise combination of sources in this version of biblical history is, however, unique to this manuscript.[101] By providing an illustrated summary of key events in the Old and New Testaments, the beginning of the manuscript seems to constitute a prelude to and point of reference for the other works in the collection, locating the texts that come after it within the framework of biblical history. The saints' lives that follow this account of sacred history continue its chronological and thematic progression, beginning with figures associated directly with Christ (such as Mary Magdalene, John the Baptist and the apostles) and moving on to include the Lives of saints from the early Christian period. The hagiographic texts are then followed by

[101] The careful construction of this section of the manuscript to produce a unique version of spiritual history has been explored in some detail by Guggenbühl: *Recherches*, pp. 141—77.

miracles of the Virgin (*De L'Abbesse* to *Del Diable qui se fit clerc et divin*) and eschatological works (*Le Dit de l'Unicorne* to the *Quinze Signes du jugement dernier*); these texts complete the religious section, marking a progression towards the end of Christian time and stressing the importance of repentance and confession before that end is reached.

The religious section of the Arsenal manuscript can be usefully compared to the Canonici collection. The first section of Arsenal 3516 contains a number of texts which also appear in the Canonici manuscript: notably, the Lives of Andrew, Moses, Thaïs, Mary the Egyptian and Juliana. The first section of the manuscript also focuses on the end of the world and final day of reckoning; it includes several eschatological texts at the end of the section and concludes with a full page illumination of the Last Judgement. Thus, in a similar way to the Canonici collection, early saints appear, on the one hand, alongside an account of biblical history that suggests a continuity between these texts and a distant, spiritually infused Christian past, and, on the other hand, anticipate an apocalyptic future when all will be judged by God. However, the communities invoked by these religious texts are, in the Arsenal manuscript, connected to a much larger project that situates and interpellates community in a way that is substantially different from the Canonici collection. The inclusion of other types of text in subsequent sections of the manuscript argues for an alternative notion of community to that in Canonici, Miscellaneous 74, a notion that depends less on judgement and sin than on the complementarity of the physical and spiritual worlds in the universal location of humankind.

4.3.1. Interpretative Community

After the Last Judgement, the Arsenal collection contains a number of texts concerning the physical, astrological and geographical composition of the world along with texts on the nature of its creatures and stones. Although it could be argued that these texts form a separate chapter on the natural world discreet from that concerned with saints and biblical narrative, these more 'scientific' texts develop the concern with sacred history exhibited in the opening section in other ways. The scientific works contained in the collection are all strongly influenced by Christian thought. The *Image du monde*, while ostensibly describing the astrological positioning of the human world, situates God within its diagrammatic illustrations of this position (plate 7). Similarly, the richly illustrated bestiary by Pierre le Picard, although on one level a supposedly veridical account of the nature of exotic and fantastical creatures, often provides glosses

emphasising the Christian significance of their behaviour or appearance. The lapidary likewise suggests how the qualities of certain precious stones can be interpreted from a Christian perspective. What this part of the manuscript contributes to the opening section is thus a quasi-scientific basis for the Christian history related in that section; the natural world and the principles governing its various functions are, in these texts, evidence of God's creation and of the veracity of the Christian faith. The communities addressed by the religious texts in the first section of the collection are therefore located in relation both to sacred history and to the natural world that ostensibly reflects the significance of that history. Accepting one's place in an ordered cosmos means accepting one's naturally ordained relationship to God; placing oneself in God's creation involves marvelling at the complexity of its significance and accepting the inevitability of its eventual destruction at the hands of its creator.[102]

What the second section of the manuscript sets up is a mode of reading not unlike that described in Chapter Three, whereby significance is ascribed to objects or events through an interpretative process that asserts meaning as an inherent – rather than an attributed – property of what one perceives. However, related to this is an effort to locate humanity in time and space, to give a sense of one's precise position within a divinely ordered cosmological and biological scheme. The way in which this operates in the texts themselves can be illustrated in part by looking at the *Table de la Mappemonde*, which summarises in prose a collection of extracts chosen from the *Image du monde*. The extracts paraphrased in the *Table* include descriptions of the four elements, the firmament, the seven planets, lunar and solar eclipse, the Bear constellation; explanations of various weather conditions; the reasons for the saltiness of the sea; and a description of the division of the land into three continents. The only chapter which is not taken from the *Image* is the first, which announces itself as a description of 'coment n*ostr*e sires jh*es*u crist fist ciel *et* te*rr*e *et* totes les coses q*ui* sont el ciel *et* en te*rr*e' (f. 156vc). This chapter may have been taken from the initial passages on the creation described in the *Histoire sainte* in this manuscript;[103] whether or not this is the case, the interpolated first chapter clearly links both the *Table* and the *Image* to the sacred history related in the first section of the collection, identifying the descriptions of cosmology and meteorology that follow it as modalities of Christian epistemology. Given that the *Table* appears at the very beginning of the second section

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[102] This would reflect Gellrich's suggestion that the medieval book is a structuring principle, or 'idea'. See Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book*, pp. 18—21; 29—50.

[103] The original ff. 1—3 are missing, making it impossible to determine whether or not the 1st chapter of the *Table* has been lifted from this particular text. Guggenbühl nonetheless claims that it is 'presque certain' that the compiler took these passages from the *Histoire sainte* in the Arsenal manuscript. See *Recherches*, p. 247.

of the manuscript, it seems plausible that the appeal to the supposed Christian origins of the world is intended to act as a backdrop to all of the texts in this section (and possibly to the final section as well). The *Table* invites its listeners to see the *ciel et terre* that are about to be described and investigated in the works that follow in the context of creation history, thus encouraging them to consider human knowledge of the world as a step towards understanding their own, divine origins.

The hermeneutic process involved here is relatively simple: the world is described in order that it may be read within the purview of divine power, as living testimony to the existence of God as author of all things. This interpretative process is taken a stage further in texts such as the bestiary and the lapidary, where God's creation is not only described as such, but also gives rise to other meanings which allegorically validate the Christian faith in other ways. Thus, for example, the pelican is not only created by God, it also signifies Christ through the sacrifice it supposedly makes for its young; thus, precious stones are not only of divine confection, they also symbolise Christian virtues; and so on. This repeated insistence on exegesis returns again and again to God as origin and source of meaning, encouraging readers or listeners to recognise contiguities between their role as interpreters of texts in the manuscript and the interpretations of the world and its allegorical significance offered by the texts themselves.

The textual environment in which community appears in the collection is thus rather more complex than that of the Canonici manuscript. The second section of Arsenal 3516 refers to a Christian past in situating its readers or listeners, but this is seen alongside an insistence on one's situation within the physical world. It should be emphasised that this 'physical world' is in many respects no less fantastical than the Christian myth of origins that precedes it. Indeed, the point of including so many illustrations of aspects of the natural world described in this section is presumably to present these features to the reader for the first time (after all, it is not every day that one catches a glimpse of the sirens or Argus the cowherd). The purpose of this scientific section is to suggest, then, that the physical world is in fact a world of signs to be deciphered, a world that leads back to God and the meaning of creation. The situation of community in the manuscript thus crucially depends on interpretation: interpretation of the world as God's creation, interpretation of aspects of that creation as allegories of Christian truths and, finally, interpretation of groups of scientific texts in terms of Christian narratives told in other sections of the same manuscript.

Having said this, it is worth reflecting just a little on what sense of community emerges from these two sections of the Arsenal collection. As I have suggested, the first part of the manuscript resembles the Canonici collection in a number of respects, situating the reader or listener within a Christian community framed by the beginning and end of biblical time. The historical dimensions of this location are, in the Arsenal manuscript, more sharply defined insofar as there is a sense of chronology and comprehensiveness in the selection and organisation of texts in this section that is lacking in the Canonici manuscript. Nevertheless, the community that emerges from the accreted first and second person appeals in many of the texts in the first section has much in common with the penitential community of the Canonici collection. This interpellated community is mindful of the sins of humanity and conscious of future judgement; it is a community that looks to religious texts as a source of truth, advice and potential salvation. As Guggenbühl has shown, certain misogynist passages have been suppressed by the *remanieur* in the *Dit de l'Unicorne*.[104] However, the first section of the Arsenal manuscript still contains a number of texts which equate femininity and sinful physicality, such as the Lives of Thaïs and Mary the Egyptian. If the first section of Arsenal 3516 is indeed less overtly misogynist than a collection such as the Canonici manuscript, the community which the first section of the Arsenal collection addresses is still a largely undifferentiated collectivity in which gender particularity is implicitly rejected along with the physical world.

The universal pretensions of such a notion of community seem to be further underlined in the second section of the Arsenal manuscript, which locates humankind within an astrological, geographical and natural environment that embraces all of the known world. However, what is potentially lost in this section is a sense of community as a specific *as well as* a universal body. The relationship between God and the natural world is clearly in evidence in this part of the collection – as many of the diagrams in the *Image du monde* show (see plate 7) – yet man's position within this scheme is possibly less self-evident in the second section than it was in the first: it is, for instance, noteworthy that man is never explicitly located on such diagrams. As part of creation, humanity has an obvious obligation to God as author of all being; the acknowledgement of such an obligation nonetheless shifts the terms of the relationship set up in the initial section of the manuscript. For the specificity of one's place in creation is implicitly reliant on an ability to understand one's environment and the place of God within it, an

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[104] See Guggenbühl, *Recherches*, pp. 232—38. As will be evident from my remarks here, I would remain sceptical as to whether this proves the sympathetic attitude towards women which Guggenbühl claims for the *remanieur* as a result of these (and other) 'pro-feminine' modifications.

ability that informs the interpretative impulses of many of the texts in the scientific section. Thus, the introduction to the lapidary rather anxiously insists on a reading of precious stones as part of God's creation, a reading that must go beyond mere scientific (and pagan) investigation:

> Len troeve lisant que evaus li rois darrabe envoia a noiron lenpereor de ro*m*me un livre q*ui* li dist les forces *et* les vertus des pieres *et* lor nons *et* lor colors *et* les regions ou eles sont prises. M*u*lt isont les vertus g*r*anz *et* en maint lieus ont pooir ou mires ne herbes ne puent valoir. *Et* nus sages hom ne doit douter que dex nait mis vertus en pieres *et* en paroles *et* en herbes. *Et* m*u*lt feroient plus ap*er*tes vertus se ne fust la mescreance des gens *et* lor pechie. Et sachies que damedex fist un des gregnors tresors de pieres *et* lor dona gregnors vertus *et* gregnors poisance que as erbes. M*u*lt deusson estre si recevables des vertus quil mist por nos *et* tot nos abandona.
> (f. 213ra)[105]

The purely descriptive interest in the qualities of precious stones expressed in the book that the Arab king sends to Nero must therefore be supplemented with an additional understanding of the significance of these qualities for the Christian reader or listener. This appreciation of this significance supposedly guarantees two things: firstly, that one can claim to be on the side of reason, along with the wise men who similarly accept that God is responsible for the attribution of virtue to stones, words and plants. Secondly, that one can therefore claim to participate in a community that acknowledges its debt to God on account of this knowledge. If God placed such qualities in the natural world *por nos*, 'we' – as human beings and as Christian believers – are therefore obliged to acknowledge how this environment reflects the work of God and situates 'us' in relation to him. The appropriation and interpretation of pagan knowledge here creates a Christian community united through its common reading of the significance of the qualities of aspects of the physical world; it is this 'we' that interpellates the reader or listener as part of a Christian interpretative community.

As this would suggest, the relationship between the universal and the particular is not altogether lost in the second section; however, the bias towards an undifferentiated human collectivity already present in religious texts such as saints' lives is inflected in particular ways. There are undoubtedly continuities between interpretative communities in, for example, the saints' lives in the first section and the forms of allegorical reading developed in the bestiary or lapidary, but these continuities tend to emphasise the universal over the particular, humanity over community. While this is entirely in keeping with the claim to universality that almost invariably informs the constitution of community in Christian texts such as the saints' lives examined in

Chapter Three, the emphasis on human location, on a form of being in the world that is common to all, seems to draw community into the realm of human universals. Moreover, the second section reasserts a fundamental connection to the physical world that, without the symbolic glosses and allegories that pepper these works of pseudo-science, threatens to reimmerse the Christian subject in a physical environment that the first part of the manuscript seems to reject. Although the hermeneutic strategies promoted by the scientific works are intended to lead the reader or listener back to God, the forms of reading encouraged by texts such as the bestiary – a text that is by far the most copiously illustrated in the collection – run the risk of fetishising the world that they seek to look beyond. The stylised beauty of the illuminations in the bestiary as well as in other texts once again threatens to seduce the reader back into a world of colours and surfaces, a seduction that one reader, who removed thirty-five colour images from the manuscript, was clearly too weak to resist.

4.3.2. *La Communauté désœuvrée?*

Although developing the concern with understanding one's environment (and thus situating oneself within it), the final section of the collection works against the constitution of an unproblematically unified concept of community in other ways. Just as the first two sections of the manuscript locate the reader or listener historically and physically in a world ostensibly created by God, so the final section seems to situate its audience in relation to a more contemporary medieval social world. The historical focus of the first section is echoed in works that relate more recent history, most notably concerning French monarchs and aristocrats. Alongside these texts, there are a number of didactic works giving advice on comportment and morality; focusing more specifically on amorous conduct, texts such as *La Chanson d'Amors*, *De Venus* and some of the *lais* focus on love and relations between the sexes. Although it would be possible to read this section as a return to a more specific, immediately intelligible setting for Christian community based on the relationships between human beings, there are a number of problems with such a reading. The first is that there is no necessary connection to Christian community as it is conceived in section one of the manuscript: that is, biblical history does not consistently provide a backdrop for the texts in the final section, as it does in many of the scientific texts. Certainly, there are continuities with previous sections, which are reflected in the kinds of texts included in the last part of the

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[105] In the final line of this passage, *si recevables* should probably read *lui reddivables*. See *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, ed. by Studer and Evans, pp. 118—19.

manuscript. For instance, the *Roman de Judas Machabée* and the eschatological work *Chante Pleure* link back to the opening section, with its focus on key figures in biblical history and on the Last Judgement; similarly, the *Lettre d'Hippocrate* echoes the scientific themes of the second section.[106] Despite these connections, there is no clear sense of how the texts in this final section relate to earlier parts of the manuscript. One might even view the inclusion of texts such as *Chante Pleure* and the *Lettre d'Hippocrate* as a desperate attempt to create links between the texts in the final section and those in the initial parts of the collection, an attempt that merely serves to enhance the sense that these final texts resist such neat classification within the manuscript's overarching scheme. For, whereas the scientific works countenance and even encourage allegorical readings that refer back to Christian ideology and biblical history as they are represented at the beginning of the collection, no hermeneutic strategy of this kind is consistently authorised in the manuscript's final textual group. More importantly, the eclectic, often self-consciously profane selection of texts in the last section of the manuscript introduces elements that the organisation of the first two thirds of the collection excludes, resulting in a narrative collection that potentially challenges the ethos of earlier combinations of texts.

One of the most striking features of the final section is the way in which the misogyny implicit in the first part of the manuscript – misogyny which is, as Guggenbühl suggests, occasionally moderated by the *remanieur* – resurfaces in a number of places in the final section. The *Roman des Sept Sages*, the *Chastoiment des dames*,[107] the *Lai de Mélion* and the *Lai d'Aristote* all suggest – albeit with varying degrees of rancour – that women have a disruptive, often nefarious influence on male society. In the first three cases, women require disciplining of some kind as a result of the mayhem they cause or are likely to cause; in the *roman* and the two *lais*, men are implicitly invited to recognise their own folly regarding women in that of other male characters. Although this negative stereotyping is ubiquitous in medieval literature, it is of interest here because it reintroduces an element of gender specificity that the first section of the manuscript (like the Canonici collection) seems to wish to overcome. The misogyny of these narratives echoes that of earlier texts such as Lives of Mary the

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[106] Guggenbühl argues that *Chante Pleure* and the *Lettre d'Hippocrate* were intended for the 1st and 2nd sections respectively. She suggests that these texts got to the redactor too late to be included in the right section and so were tacked on at the end, with the works of more recent composition. I find this argument unconvincing: given the highly organised composition of the rest of the manuscript, I see no reason for considering these texts to be misplaced. See *Recherches*, pp. 278—81.

[107] For the changes made to this text by the *remanieur*, see Guggenbühl, *Recherches*, pp. 209—11. However, the modifications made to this text are not always as complimentary to women as Guggenbühl would claim.

Egyptian and Thaïs but is not harnessed to the same ideological goals as it is in the hagiographic texts. In the final section of the Arsenal manuscript, criticism of women is not necessarily a critique of sinful humanity: it is, first and foremost, gender specific.

A further difficulty is that poems such as the *Lai d'Aristote* draw this negative stereotyping into the realm of comedy in a way that potentially undermines the aims of other texts. Not only is the subject of the *Lai d'Aristote* relations between the sexes rather than relations between humanity and God, the tale also suggests that in matters of love, the very notion of exemplarity is utterly redundant. The introduction to the poem might lead to the assumption that the story itself is intended to be a moral tale, as it sets itself up as a true and virtuous story that is free from *vilonie*. Some of the prologue to the poem is missing due to the removal of the miniature on the other side of the folio, but it is likely that these missing sections further reinforced the sense that this was a moral poem. In other versions, the audience is here informed that the poet will tell them 'de droit essanplaire | chose qui puist valoir et plaire', thus underlining the exemplary as well as the entertaining qualities of the tale they are about to hear.[108] The main body of the *lai* relates how Alexander the Great is conquered by his love for a woman and how Aristotle, having criticised him for such folly, is himself overcome by love of the lady and agrees to be ridden by her as if he were her pony. Having arrived at the end of the poem, the 'value' of the story announced in the introduction seems to reside in counselling against any hasty judgement of those who are blinded by love, a piece of advice that possibly takes one last swipe at the old philosopher who failed to appreciate this himself.[109] As the poem puts it:

> Si puet on p*ar* cest dit ap*ra*ndre
> *Con* ne doit blasm*er* ne rep*ra*ndre
> les amantes ne les amans
> p*us* q*ue*le [Amors] a pooir *et con*mans
> *Et* force sor tous *et* sor totes
> *Et* del fait les volentes totes
> *Et* tint a hon*or* t*us* les fais
> (ff. 346vd—347ra)[110]

In suggesting that no moral condemnation of lovers is possible within the moral scheme of the poem, the *lai* endorses a determinist view of human nature in which the only lesson one can learn from the tale is acceptance of the human susceptibility to the

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[108] Henri d'Andeli, *Le Lai d'Aristote*, ed. by Delbouille, ll. 57—58.
[109] As Delbouille points out, the poem may have been written with the intention of antagonising those Aristotelian adherents in the Parisian schools who were engaged in an often acrimonious dispute with the theologians in the 1st half of the 13th century. Having a final laugh at Aristotle's expense would seem to fit in with this satirical aim. See Henri d'Andeli, *Le Lai d'Aristote*, ed. by Delbouille, pp. 20—21.
[110] Henri d'Andeli, *Le Lai d'Aristote*, ed. by Delbouille, ll. 562—68.

ravages of *Amor*. Love is not therefore something that can be shunned or guarded against: the folly to which the lover is inevitably driven is an inescapable part of what it means to be the unfortunate owner of a *cuer fin*. The poem thus suggests that any attempt to correct or reform a nature inclined towards human love is pointless; for, as its conclusion makes clear, the debilitating, even humiliating, effects of subjection to a courtly appetite for love cannot be overcome and, on that basis, should not be condemned.

Even if the *Lai d'Aristote* – and, most especially, its ending – is read ironically, the poem still challenges the ethos of the first section of this manuscript, where human nature is something that can, and must, be tamed in the interests of the Christian subject's eventual salvation. Any form of devotion to the world – inevitable or not – is something which texts in the first section continually encourage their audience to reject. By contrast, what the *Lai d'Aristote* suggests is that this rejection would, like that of Aristotle, result in a more extreme form of subjection to that which is refused; instead of escaping the world, one would discover in humiliating fashion just how fundamentally it governs the very core of human being. The *laissez-faire* approach advocated by the *lai* thus undermines one of the essential elements of community in the first section: namely, the collective ability to discipline sexual impulses and thus to transcend (rather than to revel in) sexual difference.

The emphasis on human love in other texts in this section also seems playfully to challenge the foundations of Christian community in the first part of the collection; the *Lai du trot* is a good example in this respect. This short text relates the story of an Arthurian knight called Lorois, who, while riding in the forest, encounters two groups of women on horseback. The first group are strikingly beautiful and glide elegantly along on white palfreys, each accompanied by an *ami* who rides with them. The second group present a rather different aspect: they ride on skinny black donkeys, unaccompanied, inadequately dressed, and trotting along at such a pace that their teeth jangle in their heads. On making enquiries of one of these ladies as to who the riders are, Lorois is told that the first group is composed of ladies who have loyally served *Amor* during their lifetime; these women are accompanied by the man they most love in the world and live a life of perpetual pleasure. The second group comprises those women who have shunned love; these unfortunate ladies are now condemned to suffer for their arrogance. On leaving the forest, Lorois spreads the word of this dreadful punishment to all the women he comes across.

Guggenbühl suggests that the *remanieur* took particular care over the confection of this short story. However, while remarking on the fact that the *lai* uses religious discourse in its descriptions of the rewards and torments reserved for those who have served, or failed to serve, *Amor*, Guggenbühl claims that the story has an unproblematic relationship to the religious discourse it appropriates. Summarising this position in a footnote, she produces the following reading of religious language in the *lai*:

> '[...] celes ki en lor vie | ont Amor loialment servie [...]' et qui 'bien fisent son conmandement' (vv.247—248 et 250) sont recompensées par une 'molt delitouse vie' (v.134), tandis que 'celes [...] | c'ainc por Amor ne fisent rien' (vv.265—266) se trouvent 'en [si] molt grief torment' (v.186) que personne ne peut supporter de voir 'la grant paine ne la dolor | qu'eles sueffrent e nuit e jor' (vv.191—192). Il suffit de remplacer *Amor* par *Dieu* pour que le discours se rapporte entièrement au sort des bons et des mauvais chrétiens qui se retrouvent au paradis ou en enfer.[111]

Guggenbühl's reading of the *Lai du trot* thus safely aligns it with the spiritual message of previous sections of the manuscript and, notably, with the allegorical reading strategies set up by some of the scientific works. Although this reading of the poem is certainly a possibility, there is no indication in the text itself that the replacement of *Amor* by *Dieu* is a desirable substitution; what we are potentially presented with is, instead, a text in which *Dieu* has been supplanted by *Amor*, where heaven is defined in terms of human love. The emphasis in this text is not placed on Christian salvation or love of God but rather on human love and an 'afterlife' where this is elevated as a spiritual value. The torments to which the second group of women are subjected are the result of a lack of worldly attachment which has caused them to disdain human love. The admonishment given by Lorois's unhappy informant that '*e*le avoeq*ue*s nos en venra | q*ui* trop tart sen repentira' (f. 345rb) is not a warning to those who repent too late of their absorption in the affairs of this life but a reminder to other women that punishment awaits if they do not repent of their *lack of* romantic involvement in the world.[112] One might thus easily imagine any number of dishevelled virgin martyrs bouncing along on emaciated donkeys behind women such as Yseut or Fénice.

My point is not that the *Lai du trot* would necessarily have been read in one way or the other, simply that this poem, along with other texts in this section, could have encouraged counter readings with the potential to challenge the ideological aims of previous sections of the manuscript. This said, it should of course be remembered that the challenge these texts might pose is mitigated somewhat by the light-hearted, even overtly humorous, character of the texts themselves. Although these texts may present

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[111] Guggenbühl, *Recherches*, p. 253, n. 126.
[112] *Lai du trot*, ed. by Micha, ll. 281—2.

counter-readings, one never has the impression that these readings are entirely to be taken seriously. As I have suggested in my readings of the *Lai d'Aristote* and the *Lai du trot*, the subversiveness of these texts is measured by a subtle – often comical – questioning of the bases on which community is formed in hagiographic texts and the manuscript collections in which they are included. The *Lai d'Aristote* suggests that the penitential imperative that unites community in the first part of the Arsenal manuscript (as well as in the Canonici collection) runs aground when confronted with a human nature unable to resist the deliciously humiliating seduction of *Amor*. Instead of seeking to correct such weakness, the poem suggests we should understand and accept it. The *Lai du trot* similarly countenances the view that love might challenge Christian doctrine while, at the same time, demonstrating how profane love might mimic the ideological structures that set it in place. *Amor* occupies a place in this story that connotes – and potentially supplants – love of God, inviting women to include themselves in a community that repents of a refusal to love in human contexts, rather than a failure in their devotion to God. Both of these texts therefore invite a playful consideration of what might be at stake in the formation of textual community, yet neither quite manages seriously to undermine the foundations of such a community.

It is, I think, significant that this challenge to the kinds of community formation examined in other manuscripts occurs within a collection that attempts to situate its audience in a natural and social environment as well as in relation to a Christian historical scheme. The implication of such an attempt is to demonstrate the presence of God and the meaning of Christian revelation in all aspects of human existence, yet this totalising project involuntarily exposes its own fragility. By attempting to represent the complexity of human existence and God's omnipresence at the same time, the collection introduces inconsistencies that, like so many impurities in a piece of clay, threaten to open cracks in the work within which they are incorporated. If the second section shores up the universal claims of Christian discourse, the final section demonstrates how the reading strategies that underpin such claims might malfunction or backfire. The recent work of Judith Butler would suggest that this dynamic is central to the operations of power within any discourse that lays claim to universal (or potentially universal) status; for, as she puts it:

> The established discourse remains established only by being perpetually re-established, so it risks itself in the very repetition it requires. Moreover, the former discourse is reiterated precisely through a speech act that shows something it may not say: that the discourse 'works' through its effective moment in the present, and is fundamentally dependent for its maintenance on that contemporary instance. The reiterative speech act

> thus offers the possibility – though not the necessity – of depriving the past of the established discourse of its exclusive control over defining the parameters of the universal within politics. This form of political performativity does not retroactively absolutize its own claim, but recites and restages a set of cultural norms that displace legitimacy from a presumed authority to the mechanism of its renewal.[113]

The effect of such repetition in a manuscript collection such as Arsenal 3516 is, as this would suggest, paradoxical. On the one hand, texts reiterate and reinforce the 'truth' of Christian revelation; on the other hand, that truth may be called into question by the very instance of its repetition – or, as Butler would have it, the moment of its 'restaging'. In relation to a large collection such as Arsenal 3516, this restaging is possibly even more precarious than in a manuscript such as Canonici, Miscellaneous 74. In addition to the more varied ideological constitution of certain sections of the Arsenal collection, it is unlikely that a reader or listener would have read this manuscript from cover to cover; he or she would have been far more likely to select particular texts to read either in isolation or alongside other works. The extent to which such a reader would have seen individual texts in terms of the manuscript as a whole is therefore open to debate, especially in those works where no connection of this kind is made in the texts themselves. If, as Butler argues, the established discourse '"works" through its effective moment in the present', there is always the possibility that this present – the medieval present, the moment of textual reception – fails to reinscribe the authority of the Christian discourse to which it supposedly refers.

I have argued that the final section of the Arsenal manuscript draws attention to processes of citation such as those described by Butler. Moreover, the manuscript does so in ways that potentially fail to reinforce the truth claims of the sections that precede it while, at the same time, rearticulating those claims in alternative, sometimes humorous ways. As Guggenbühl's remark concerning the *Lai du trot* makes clear, the challenge that these texts pose is built into their status as reiterations of a universal claim that is not *necessarily* undermined: after all, 'il suffit de remplacer *Amor* par *Dieu* pour que le discours se rapporte entièrement au sort des bons et des mauvais chrétiens'.... Yet this crucially relies on such a substitution being made, on seeing Love and God as synonyms rather than mutually contesting terms. Not making such a replacement (as I have chosen not to) suggests that one might similarly fail to make the hermeneutic leaps required by texts such as the bestiary or the *Image du monde* in order to tether them to Christian meanings. Or, to go a stage further, one might refuse to read the hagiographic repetition

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[113] Butler, 'Restaging the Universal', p. 41.

of Christ's sacrifice in the Lives of the martyrs as a series of mimetic reinscriptions of the crucifixion.

I am not suggesting that medieval readers or listeners would have taken this approach to the collection, or indeed that modern critics should necessarily read in this way. What is at issue here is instead the way in which the Arsenal manuscript exposes the vulnerability of the universal in Christian discourse. This collection – with its capacious and digressive qualities – even suggests that there might be a certain pleasure to be had in exposing such ideological vulnerability, that one might revel in the instabilities that both secure and undermine the work of such a universalising ideology. Seen alongside some of the points made in Chapter Three concerning the precariousness of interpellation, the Arsenal manuscript thus acts as a useful reminder of the potential failure of Christian ideology to behave in a totalising or determinative way with regard to the subjects and/or communities that it calls into being. The Arsenal collection returns us to the possibility raised in Chapter Three that medieval texts and the manuscripts that reproduce them might fail in their efforts to establish or re-establish Christian community outside the parameters of the narratives that they contain. In so doing, this manuscript also suggests (albeit in a limited way) that alternative forms of engagement might emerge from such failure: that the reappropriation of the tradition that conventionally affirms Christian community might be construed as both a subversive and a conservative move that creates new connections with tradition even as it interrupts and transforms it.

Conclusion

> The *outside* is not another space that resides beyond a determinate space, but rather, it is the passage, the exteriority that gives it access – in a word, it is its face, its *eidos*. The threshold is not, in this sense, another thing with respect to the limit; it is, so to speak, the experience of the limit itself, the experience of being-*within* an *outside*.
> (Agamben, *The Coming Community*, p. 68)

The relationships that saints' lives mediated and constituted – and might still mediate and constitute – are inevitably absent from this examination of Old French hagiography; my readings of French vernacular saints' lives have been, first and foremost, explorations of the economies that underwrite such relationships. In investigating social and sexual economy in vernacular saints' lives I have focused on the structures that allow relationships to emerge and the ways in which these structures are given narrative articulation. This has been an examination of the narrative conditions that make relationships possible, and the possible relationships that such conditions might engender. The absence of relationships from my thesis is thus explained by the fact that relationships are inevitably absent from saints' lives themselves: the forms of kinship and community that vernacular hagiography projects onto its audiences are never fully realised within the textual confines of this literature but are instead the potential outcome of the readings that these texts encourage.

To say that there are things which cannot be incorporated into academic writing is not, however, to admit that no engagement with them is possible. In my interpretations of Old French saints' lives I have tried to suggest ways in which a critical approach to this literature might be thought of both as a means of considering how saints' lives create and mediate certain relationships and also as itself a basis for interrupted or queer connections with these texts. My engagement with the relations which escape both saints' lives and academic study has therefore been a productive one in, I hope, more ways than one. I have tried to consider how the invisible end-point of hagiography not only provides a focus and structure for this literature in the French vernacular but also how this absent cause might have a constitutive function in the present, as part of a process of critical interpretation.

As I have argued, saints' lives construct a particular framework within which relations of Christian kinship and community can emerge, a framework that depends to a large extent on an engagement with social and sexual economy as this is defined in human as well as spiritual terms. It is through their representation of the gift, kinship

and community as relational forms that may be transcended and redefined by contact with a space in which these forms reach their human limit that saints' lives provide the foundations for the Christian community's relationship to God. Vernacular hagiography thus mediates between God, the saint and the community by providing narrative spaces in which community can be thought of as a form of being together that emerges at the point where human systems cease to be compelling, where relationships can be conceptualised outside the limits that such systems place upon desire and social identity. This, in turn, redirects desire towards God, associating the relationship of love, faith and service which this produces with an inherently overdetermined condensation of human social connections and the desires legitimated by those connections.

For a genre conventionally considered to participate in a sexually and socially repressive religious tradition, hagiography therefore has some remarkably potent alternative moments. As argued in Chapters Two and Three, the excessive, indefinable, unliveable relations on which hagiography builds Christian community have queer potential in certain saints' lives, a potential that may have had medieval as well as modern, or postmodern resonance. This is not to say that medieval saints' lives are avatars of social and sexual revolution, however; on the contrary, their reformulation of human social and sexual possibilities is aimed less at changing the organisation of relationships in the physical world than it is at surpassing that world altogether. The communication between human and divine systems as these are brought together in the saints' life nonetheless provides opportunities for queer connections to be made that are not fully contained within either the human or the divine economies that saints' lives represent. As argued in Chapter Three, this potential slippage may have implications for modern conceptualisations of queer community as this is construed in relation to medieval texts.

As this would suggest, much of the interest of hagiography lies in its mediation between the historical and the ahistorical, between the tangible, classifiable, temporal world and that which escapes or exceeds it. The dynamism of hagiography relies on the way these two spheres are maintained in tension with one another: it is essentially this tension that permits an ongoing, constantly renewed and revised communication with God. As I have shown, the reconcepualisation of human relationships and desires forms a crucial part of the effort to think beyond social constraints in saints' lives. The relationships that vernacular hagiography attempts to forge between God and the Christian community, although based on an engagement with the material, social and temporal world, always to some extent elude that world. Hagiographic community at its

most basic emerges through the text as a form of communion that is therefore situated at the limit of identities in the 'real' world: in this sense, Christian community is universal, immaterial and fundamentally ahistorical.

Saints' lives thus pose a challenge to modern medievalist critics insofar as the enterprise of criticism is traditionally thought to be concerned with that which is available to historical and critical enquiry. In medieval French studies, one of the few critics who has attempted explicitly to consider the possible relationship between an engagement with the elusiveness of the affective connections that saints' lives mediate and modern, academic approaches to these texts is Duncan Robertson. In his introduction to *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, Robertson provocatively suggests that modern academic critics should seek a locus of communication with hagiographic material 'in which a preferably objective literary history will prove not incompatible with a dynamic involvement on the part of a scholarly reader'.[1] Commenting on Louis Bouyer's reading of the Life of St Anthony, Robertson therefore commends the Catholic scholar's reading on the grounds that '[his] stance with respect to the life of St. Anthony is essentially the same as that of the medieval reader of a traditional saint's life'.[2] Robertson praises this mode of response as a means of renewing the tradition in which saints' lives participate by reintegrating them into present experience. Yet, for Robertson, this kind of empathy with medieval saints' lives is essentially a matter of belief. As a form of religious discourse, hagiography is 'opposed, even antithetical, to the secular culture of the modern university, and all the more accessible to critics working within the church'.[3]

As will already be clear from my discussion in Chapter Three, I agree with Robertson only up to a point. The communion with medieval texts that he advocates is profoundly alien to the unenlightened approach of the non-believer, and the emotional and cognitive connection with the tradition in which saints' lives participate likewise runs counter to secular academic discourse. Robertson's study therefore seems to mourn that which it cannot incorporate, while opening itself to readings that might accomplish what it cannot. In so doing, Robertson situates himself as a kind of academic hagiographer, retelling these stories 'as though in the presence of other readers;

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[1] Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 21. Cf. Vitz's suggestion that 'as heirs to humanist hagiography, we as scholars need to come to a deeper appreciation of the importance and the power of the oral tradition, as broadly construed – of the voice, of all that is persuasive and interpersonal – in the history of the lives of the saints'. 'From the Oral to the Written', p. 114.
[2] Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 22.
[3] Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 20.

[reading] them *to* other readers, as though reading them aloud'.[4] Despite Robertson's best intentions, this attempt to reintegrate a communal experience of vernacular saints' lives into scholarly work on them seems to have little impact on the presentation of what is otherwise a solid academic study of Old French hagiography. There is never a sense of how it might be possible to respond to the stories Robertson reproduces and analyses from anything but the position of a true believer, leaving the question of how exactly the 'secular' academic reader is to commune with these texts on anything but their own terms.

Robertson's comments nonetheless invite reflection on how an academic approach to saints' lives might incorporate or acknowledge affective engagements with these texts. My own response to the question of how such connections might be thought of as complementary rather than as opposed to critical readings has already been outlined in my thesis. However, as a coda to this response, I would like further to reflect on how some of the ideas I have put forward might relate both to Robertson's remarks and to certain debates currently taking place in medieval studies. This, indeed, returns to the relationship between absence and the discourses that circulate around it with which I began. As noted above, Robertson's position separates a communion with saints' lives that eludes academic analysis from secular critical enterprise *tout court*. This implicitly places affective connection with hagiographic texts in opposition to both historical and literary studies of these texts from within the Academy: the Catholic scholars that Robertson cites 'have remained innocent of the postmodernist *états d'ame* [*sic*], the epistemological reappraisals, the obsession with the mirage of objectivity, and many other anxieties which have haunted literary critics in the World'.[5] Yet this communion is nonetheless what Robertson suggests secular criticism, to the extent that it remains interested in saints' lives, revolves around.

Of course, the difficulty of reconciling traditional academic approaches with an experience of the past is not confined to the study of saints' lives; nor, for that matter, is the relationship between the universal and the material within which this problem is framed. As Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay pointed out in their introduction to an edition of the *Forum for Modern Language Studies* that appeared in 1997, there is an acute anxiety in medieval studies concerning the relationship between theory and practice that in many respects deals with remarkably similar issues.[6] This anxiety, as Gaunt and Kay

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[4] Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 26.
[5] Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 20.
[6] Gaunt and Kay, 'Theory of Practice and Practice of Theory'. See also Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text*, pp. xi—xvi; and Aers, 'A Whisper in the Ear of the Early Modernists'.

suggest, often crystallises around the practice of historicist criticism and the New Philology as influential examples of the new directions that interest in the material and temporal contexts of medieval texts has taken. If, for certain critics, historicism is insufficiently theorised, for others, practice is an alternative to theory, which is thought to lead the critic away from his or her primary object of study. Practice – as an historically and materially embedded occupation – is thus seen by some as profoundly antithetical to the universalising tendencies of theoretical reflection, an antithesis that, following Bourdieu, Gaunt and Kay encourage medievalists to think beyond.

Since the publication of Gaunt and Kay's essay, the anxiety that they pinpoint in medieval studies seems to have become more, rather than less, entrenched. The perceived division between theory and practice has, in the last three years or so, been accentuated by contributions that decry the 'secular catechism of the day' as a postmodern distortion that prevents the critic from knowing anything about the past;[7] and, somewhat less vehemently, by exhortations to approach the past with a reverence that allows it to hold us in awe, without requiring us to judge or appropriate it.[8] It thus seems to be increasingly the case that, we – that is, 'we' as readers, 'we' as critics, 'we' as students – are asked to choose between theory and history in our interpretations of medieval texts. Moreover, the supposed antagonism of history and theory is often thought to derive from a theoretical presentism that remakes the past in its own image. Thus, Allen Frantzen argues that 'it is more important to understand medieval attitudes as clearly as possible than it is to maneuver those attitudes into alignment with our own'; the worst offenders being 'sad' and 'pathetic' queer critics, who – despite evidence to the contrary – expend inordinate amounts of energy 'on reassuring each other (and their readers) that medieval people were, in some ways, as tolerant and queer as we could wish them to be'.[9]

By contrast, those interested in the two areas of theoretical inquiry that seem to come in for most criticism – psychoanalysis and queer theory – have insisted (with Gaunt and Kay) on the complementarity, rather than the radical separation, of theory and the practice of history. One of the directions that thinking on this problem has taken is a reflection on the nature and practice of history itself. For instance, in their introduction to *Queering the Middle Ages*, Glenn Burger and Steven Kruger argue that 'queer theorizing, in its "preposterous" revision of temporal sequence, has important

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[7] Patterson, 'Chaucer's Pardoner on the Couch', p. 678.
[8] See Bynum's recent reflections on wonder as the most sensitive way to approach medieval texts: *Metamorphosis and Identity*, p. 74.
[9] Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, p. 20.

implications for how we think about *history*'.[10] In disturbing the question of history and anachronism, queer medievalism is, they claim, an historicising project distinct both from mainstream historicism, and from gay, lesbian and feminist medievalisms, all of which tend to treat temporality as relatively unproblematic. Perhaps the most consummate articulation of the kind of queer history that Burger and Kruger advocate is Carolyn Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval*, which, as seen in Chapter Three, stages a queer engagement with the past that attempts to remake subjectivities and communities in the present. For Dinshaw, the location of the queer in medieval culture provides an opportunity for touching the past in a particular way, resulting in forms of queer connection that partially link marginalities in both past and present.

One of the most compelling reflections on the possibilities of a theoretically engaged consideration of our relationship to the past is articulated in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero's essay on the 'pleasures of history'.[11] Fradenburg and Freccero point out that 'positing the power of the past to disrupt and remake the present is not necessarily to adopt a naïve continuism' and that alteritism might at times itself function to stabilise the identity of 'the modern'.[12] History, they argue, is inevitably bound to desire and to the pleasures we take as academics in the historical identifications that produce historical discourse. Desire is thus at work in alteritist and transhistorical understandings of the past, just as it is implicated in current historicist approaches that insist on recognising such an investment in historical enquiry. 'The historian', Fradenburg and Freccero argue,

> does not so much retrace the past as magnify our power to see it; history is not pure repetition, because its very pursuit of sameness (in the form of accurate representation) requires a technology of transformation. As such, history is riddled by the paradoxes of identification: by the impossible pleasures and obligations of imitating the past.[13]

Insofar as saints' lives challenge us to think about the relationship between the writing (or re-writing) of history, the interpretation of the past and the relationships and desires to which such an undertaking gives rise, these texts potentially have an important role to play in critical debates such as these. Saints' lives provide an appropriate point from which to think about how connections to the past should be – or might be – negotiated, not least because their own relationship to history and to the universal is often considered problematic. As such, hagiographic engagements with

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[10] Burger and Kruger, *Queering the Middle Ages*, p. xii.
[11] Fradenburg and Freccero, *Premodern Sexualities*, pp. xiii—xxiv. See also Fradenburg's reflections on history and the making of knowledge as enjoyment in *Sacrifice Your Love*, pp. 1—12 and 43—78.
[12] Fradenburg and Freccero, *Premodern Sexualities*, p. xix.
[13] Fradenburg and Freccero, *Premodern Sexualities*, p. xvi.

history have traditionally been subject to forms of criticism approximating historicist critiques of 'postmodern' approaches to the medieval past. As the Bollandists have amply demonstrated, saints' lives often disrespect historical and factual accuracy in reaching for a more profound, metaphysical 'truth', resulting in corrupt and lamentably inaccurate accounts that are '[dénués] de valeur historique'.[14] Moreover, the hagiographer, as the supposed guardian of historical tradition, falls lamentably short of the standards set by modern historical practice. Like the medieval historian, the hagiographer is all too frequently 'plus préoccupé des goûts de son public que de la recherche pénible de la vérité'.[15] In making historical accuracy subordinate to the edifying aim of the saint's life, hagiographic authors succumb to the present in a way that obscures the past in order to resurrect it in the present.

This positivist attitude has been offset in more recent historical scholarship by arguments for an approach to hagiography that appreciates its historical value while not insisting on excising those details that are not verifiably true. Felice Lifshitz has even gone as far as to argue that, if historians were to dispense with the positivist yardstick that has traditionally been used to distinguish between hagiography and historiography, they would find that the two supposedly distinct genres were in many cases indistinguishable from one another. Hagiography is thus either not historical enough or is synonymous with a more inclusive definition of what history incorporates in its medieval settings; its status as history largely depends on where we are prepared to situate the boundaries of history itself.

As suggested in my Introduction, the medieval hagiographer is fundamentally concerned with history, but a history that maintains a dynamic relationship to the medieval present. This concern with the relationship between past and present is perhaps particularly perceptible in vernacular hagiography, the very existence of which testifies to an effort to communicate with Christian communities whose ability to understand Latin was increasingly variable and, in some cases, non-existent. The engagement that takes place in French vernacular hagiography with other, non-religious genres similarly emerges from the dialogue that saints' lives maintain with their shifting historical and literary contexts, contexts that they almost certainly influenced in their turn. Old French hagiography thus seems committed to a past that can – and must – be engaged with in the present: a past that is continually rearticulated in order to be experienced afresh.

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[14] Delehaye, 'La Légende de saint Eustache', p. 33.
[15] Delehaye, *Légendes*, p. 62.

Saints' lives themselves often demonstrate an awareness of the necessary communication between past and present in the definition of what can loosely be termed history. Yet this is not to say that hagiography is obsessed by the present. The saint's life mediates a complex temporality, placing the Christian community in touch with its past, present and future by narrating an event or series of events that are at once 'historical' and omnipresent. The past is effective through its moment in the present, yet it is so precisely because it speaks of something that lies beyond it: as seen in Chapter Four, the saint's life is an historical narrative that places the community in contact with a past that is outside human chronology, that engages past and present in order to gesture at the infinite that lies beyond both. History is not therefore simply to be wondered at, it is to be engaged with, manipulated and surpassed.

One might object that this is not a valid model for critical (or historical) practice in the present, that it lacks scientific objectivity or critical distance and is therefore unsuitable as an academic (as opposed to an empathetic, ideological) model. Empathy can of course be taken too far. Yet, as Robertson suggests, if there exists an approach to medieval saints' lives that is historically sympathetic, it is surely one that attempts to combine the imperative to critically engage with the past and its texts and an effort to connect with them. Seen in this light, saints' lives encourage a consideration of the relationship between history and community, past and present, universal and specific, abstract and concrete that is not a million miles away from recent psychoanalytic and queer interventions in the study of medieval literature. Vernacular hagiography is, to paraphrase Fradenburg and Freccero, a history that magnifies rather than retraces the past; its repetitions are aimed both at imitation and transformation, reiteration and renewal. As such, saints' lives manipulate (in more or less sophisticated ways) the obligations, pleasures and desires of history while also insisting on their role in the pursuit of historical and subjective truth. As noted above, modern approaches such as that of Fradenburg and Freccero encourage a relationship to the past that acknowledges the contemporary desires that produce, mediate and emerge from our relationships to history while insisting on a commitment to historical truth as something which is intimately bound to such desires. If these interventions are anachronistic, appropriative and insufficiently reverential, they are also very much in keeping with the ethos of medieval vernacular hagiography itself.

One might therefore think of saints' lives not only as texts from another era but also as historical narratives that maintain connections with the past while being dynamically, yet critically engaged in the present. This engagement between past and

present, as saints' lives themselves suggest, has the potential not only to affirm identities in the present but also to yield a kind of surplus of being that escapes temporal or physical location. The mediating functions that saints' lives perform are linked to an escape from tangible reality that calls the present radically into question, enabling their readers and audiences briefly to make contact with an absence of temporal or physical form. The threshold between past and present in hagiography is also a threshold between potential and actual, a threshold where being might be thought of as prior to form, as engaged in a process of becoming suspended between moments in time. Contact with such a threshold does not amount to a colonisation of the past, nor does it necessarily affirm the supremacy of identities in the present; it is perhaps that which in history escapes both historicisation and theory: the absent cause of desire around which all critical enterprise turns.

Appendix 1

Descriptions of the manuscripts referred to in Chapter Four

1. The Campsey Manuscript (London, BL, Additional 70513)

The volume, which measures 254mm by 192mm, is written on vellum and contains 267 folios, of which the last two are blank. The current binding dates from the nineteenth century and is in diced brown leather with a crowned letter 'P' stamped in gold at the centre of both covers.[1] As Russell points out, 'The heraldic bookplate of the sixth Duke of Portland on folio i suggests that the binding was done by William Cavendish-Bentinck some time after he succeeded as Duke in 1879, and prior to the exhibition of the MS at Welbeck in 1903'.[2]

Writing in the manuscript appears in two columns of 32 to 34 lines to the page. The scribal hand used in the first quire of the manuscript is distinct from that of the other quires, and has been dated as early fourteenth-century; quires 2—32 have been dated as late thirteenth-century. The note at the top of the first folio, "Cest livere est a couent de Campisse", is in the same hand as the first quire of the manuscript. Despite the break between items 12 and 13, the thirteenth-century section of the Campsey manuscript (ff. 9—267), was written as a single compilation; this can be seen from the repetition of certain codicological features such as ruling and the style of historiated initials. All texts other than the *Vie de sainte Catherine* (the last item in the collection) are written across quire divisions.

In the thirteenth-century section of the codex, portraits are provided for all but three of the texts. Two of these three – items 5 and 10 – have ornamented initials. It is impossible to tell whether an illumination originally accompanied the Life of Thomas Becket which begins this part of the collection, as this item is missing its first leaf. However, as Russell points out, the missing text 'would fit exactly on a leaf ruled in the same fashion as the rest of the quire, leaving two line spaces for the rubric and initial, historiated or not'.

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[1] See British Library, *Catalogue of Additions*, II, esp. pp. 599—601.
[2] Russell, 'The Campsey Collection of Old French Saints' Lives'.

2. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74

The manuscript is of small format, measuring 180mm by 115mm; it contains 138 vellum folios and three paper folios of considerably later date (two at the beginning and one at the end), which must have been inserted when the collection was re-bound. The red leather binding is eighteenth-century. The green label on the spine reads: 'VITE DI SANTI IN LINGUA PROVENZ. COD. MEM.' The paper flyleaf (f. ii), which is contemporary with the binding, gives details of some of the contents of the manuscript in a bold, flowing hand:

> Vita di sant Alessis
> Vita di san Moise' d'Etiopia
> La vie de saintĕ Taisien
> La vita di santa Giuliana
> La vita di santa Eufrosina

Although this manuscript has not been identified as part of the collection of Jacopo Soranzo (1686—1720), the hand on the flyleaf resembles that of his third librarian, Francesco Melchiori. The claim that this may be a Soranzo manuscript must nevertheless remain tentative, as the volume bears none of the other characteristics, such as catalogue number, foliation, or Soranzo's signature.[3]

Writing in the manuscript appears in a single column throughout; initials are in red and sometimes blue. In those texts written in alexandrines (see Table 3), all twelve syllables appear on the same line; where this occurs, a point indicating the place of the caesura is often included. As Meyer and Cloetta have pointed out, the manuscript is in different hands, all dating from the beginning of the thirteenth century. The first three poems (ff. 1—85) are written in the same hand, which differs from the hand found in ff. 87—119. The hand used in the last part of the text is not the same as that in the section immediately preceding it, but shares many characteristics with the first hand (ff. 1—85); it is possible that these hands can be identified with the same scribe (see Table 3).[4] Either way, poems four and five (*Eufroysine* and *Marie L'Egyptienne*) were written by the same scribe and that scribe did not write the other poems in the manuscript, although he wrote during the same period.

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[3] See Mitchell, 'Trevisan and Soranzo'. An example of a list of contents written by Melchiori is given in Plate XIV. I am grateful to the Bodleian librarians for their help and advice in this matter.

[4] Meyer claimed that there were 2 hands in the manuscript; Cloetta wavers between 2 and 3. Meyer, *Documents manuscrits*, p. 145; *Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, pp. 12 and 26. For a useful summary of their positions see *Euphrosine*, ed. by Hill, p. 160 and n. 10. My own opinion is that there are only 2 hands.

3. Paris, Arsenal 3516

The manuscript is a large collection measuring 328mm by 245mm. It currently comprises 357 folios of parchment, although as the revised foliation in arabic numerals indicates, fourteen folios have been lost. Depending on the metre of the texts, writing is divided into three or four columns to the page, containing between 48 and 53 lines each (the usual number being 50).

The collection contains around sixty different texts divided thematically into three sections. The first is composed of religious and/or moral works; the second contains quasi-scientific texts (often with a religious flavour); and the third section focuses on chivalric and Arthurian literature, although it also contains a small number of religious and scientific texts as well. The calendar and computational table which appear in ff. 1—2 seem to have been added after the completion of the manuscript, although the justification of these folios corresponds to the rest of the codex, suggesting that these leaves were copied in the same workshop as the other texts in the collection. The verso side of folio three contains a table of contents.[5]

The collection is the work of at least three different hands; all of these copyists worked in the Picard dialect. The writing is thirteenth-century, possibly the second half of the thirteenth century. The manuscript contains 79 miniatures, 27 drawings in red and black ink and two full-page colour illuminations; 35 miniatures have been cut from the manuscript, leaving gaps in the text on the reverse side of each folio where this occurs.

Linguistic evidence, the characteristics of certain illustrations in the collection and the list of saints in the calendar at the beginning of the manuscript indicate that the codex was produced in Artois, probably in Saint-Omer. The calendar and computational table (which concerns the period from 1268—1367) allow the manuscript to be dated to between 1246 and 1267—8.[6]

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[5] For descriptions of the manuscript, see (for example) Guggenbühl, *Recherches*, pp. 1—118; *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski, p. 26; Waters, *The Anglo-Norman Voyage of St Brendan*, pp. xviii—xix; Bibliothèque nationale, *Trésors*, p. 138 (entry 267); and Ministère de l'instruction publique, *Catalogue*, III (1887), pp. 395—405.

[6] See Guggenbühl, *Recherches*, pp. 8—14. A date of 1265 is given by Cloetta in his edition of the *Poème moral*, (p. 14); Långfors corrects this dating in *'Li Regrès Nostre Dame'*, p. xxiv. A 1265 date is proposed by Baker, Dembowski and Jenkins. See *Andrew*, ed. by Baker, p. 423; *Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski, p. 26; Jenkins, *Eructavit*.

Appendix 2

Complete list of rubrics in the Oxford MS version of the *Poème moral*

f. 19r prime distinctionis capitulum primum

f. 20r secunde distinctionis capitulum primum

f. 20r tercie distinctinctionis capitulum primum

f. 21r vaine est la ioie de cest siecle et que mult est digne chose de la sainte arme. i. capitulum

f. 22v la vie moyses uns bons exemples ke bon fait le mal laissier et deu servir. ii.

f. 25r a le foiz lait deus mult travillier ces qui lui servent iii.

f. 25v porcoi deus lait ses amis tant penneir. iiii.

f. 27r ke li anemis fuit le saint home ne nose venir la u il est. v.

f. 27v ke sovent plorent la sainte gens por lor pechiez upor le desier de paradis. vi.

f. 28v la vie de.s. thaisien uns bons exemples. as dames ki soi orguillent de lor bealteit.

f. 29v ke mult est perillouse chose de bealteit et ke mult est folz li hom ki seit ke li anemis est fel et si ne se vult de lui partir. viii.

f. 30v ke bons hom s pasnutius fu ki sainte taisien convertit [left hand margin: ix]

f. 31r coment sainz pasnuses vint a sainte thaisien si cum uns hom del secle [right hand margin: x]

f. 31v ke grant mal fait ki altrui fait Et que totes les choses fuient ce que nuire lor puet senz lhome ki ades siet lanemis. xi.

f. 33v ke rien ne li aiue kien laltre secle se repent. xii.

f. 34v confaitement om doit faire confession. xii. [*sic*]

f. 35r ke par honte et langoisse com en at de fait om les pechiez. xiiii.

f. 35v ki entote sa vie nat fait se mal non nest pas dignes cant il muert de vraie repentance. xv

f. 36v ke mult est perillouse la deriene hore. xvi

f. 37r om ne se puet adeu acordeir dun pechiet com tant com ne vult laissier laltre .xvii.

f. 39v ke bon est alome querre celui qui miez le seit conscilier. [left hand margin: xviii]

f. 40r ki vrais repentans est volentiers fait de cant com li commande. xix.

f. 40v ke thaisis sabandonat a s pasnucium. xix.

f. 41r porcoi thaisis arst.cccc. livres dor et de cant kelleot

f. 41v coment sainz pasnutius lenclost enune piere. et com vivement elle se contint. xxii.

f. 42v ke li iusteciers doit estre merciables et droituriers [left hand margin: xxiii]

f. 43v comfaitement li prestre doient les pecchors ocire [left hand margin: xxiiii]

f. 45r ke li mal iustisiers perdent grant merite paravarisce xxv

f. 45v com ne doit rien prendre par iustise faire. xxvi

f. 46r Que plus aimet li malz iusticiers desturblier que pais xxvii

f. 46v ke li bo*n*s iusteciers ne heit mie celui d*on*t il fait iustise mais le pechiet kil li fait co*m*pareir

f. 47r ke pasnusi*us* alat a sai*n*t anthone dema*n*d*er* se thaisis astoit delivree de ses pechiez *et* co*m* li fu ensegniet xxviiii

f. 47v ke d*eu*s fait ce q*ui* soi amis li proient xxx

f. 49v ke li hom ne doit mie avoir t*ro*p grant paur de ses pechiez por le desperreir. xxxi.

f. 50v ke li ang*e*le emporte sainte thaisien xxii [*sic*]

f. 51r co*m* chaitive de cest secle. *et* cu*m* delitable est cele de parådis. S*ecun*de distinctio*n*is capitulu*m* p*ri*mu*m*

f. 53v ke plus ont de poine cil ki le siecle servent. ke cil qui deu servent. ii.

f. 53v ke li avers ne se reposet onques. iii.

f. 54r ketote lavie al orgillo*us* nest se travas non.iiii.

f. 54v keli riches hom se puet salver *et* si ne semble mie voir [left hand margin: .v.]

f. 55v cant li hom doit guerpir de cant kil at .vi.

f. 55v co*m* ne puet ensemble deu *et* la richise am*er* *et* se puet om deu co*n*querre *et* richise avoir.vii.

f. 56v ke li avoirs p*er*t celui ki orgillo*us* senfait. viii.

f. 56v deces q*ui* envanitei[t] done*n*t de ca*n*t kil ont .ix.

f. 57r space left for rubric. In other versions, 'alsi granz pechiez est par vaniteit doneir ke par avarisce retenir. x'.

f. 57v space left for rubric. In other versions, 'ke granz pechiez est de donneir as juglors et as lecheors et ke grande almone est de bien faire as povres. xi'.

f. 59v space left for rubric. In other versions, ' kaltretant vat la bone volenteiz cum li donneirs. xii'.

f. 59v space left for rubric. In other versions, 'ke li amurs de jhesu ne puet estre uisouse. xiii'.

f. 60r space left for rubric. In other versions, 'ke perduz niert mie por quil ne donet de quant quil at ne quele deference at entre lo commant et lo conseil. xiv'.

f. 61v space left for rubric. In other versions, 'de queil ordene que li om soit bien soi puet salveir. xv'.

Appendix 3

Passages transcribed from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74

Extract A: Taken from the Life of Moses in the *Poème moral*

f. 24r Cant moyses ver d*e*u. ot savie turneie.
Ilh avoit si cum moines. vestue cote leie.
Ne manioit mie mut de salmon apevreie.
Ne ne li criut engros. li colz ne laventreie.
Locuir navoit il mie. deliet *et*roselant.
Ne naloit pas ses ventres par devant luj crola*n*t.
hom ne soloit ia mie. Gras devenir iunant.
Mais or nest pas mervelle. li secles vait muant.
Anz quil devenist moines. sastoit il gros *et* Gras.
Mais ne demorat guaires. se fut maigres *et* las.
les pechiez kavoit faiz. ceaz noblioit il pas.
Beaz deus cu*m* tost samende. de cuj tu mercit as.
Puis fist un habitacle utoz iors demora.
onkes plus sainte vie. hermites ne mena.
ce ke il avoit fait nule. ore noblia.
Segurs soit quisamendet ke m*er*cit trovera.

(*Poème*, ed. by Cloetta, str. 45—49)

Extract B: Taken from the Life of Mary the Egyptian

f. 113v ta*n*t errat p*ar* nuiz *et* p*ar* dis. Afain asoit *et* adurs lis
Q*ue* ta*n*t ifut en le boscage. q*ue*le devi*n*t tote salvage
Senp*re*s fure*n*t sidrap useit. *et* soi soler tot depaneit
ta*n*t p*ar*liver ta*n*t p*ar*lesteit. tot li norcire*n*t licosteit
Se tenre car muat color. q*ui*ans eret blance cu*m* florr
Color muat sabele crine. bla*n*ce devi*n*t co*m*me lermine
Desoz la face eret brulee. del soloilh *et* dela ialee
f. 114r Labocheliert atenevie. *et* enviro*n* lacars norcie
et tant avoit noir leme*n*ton. co*m*sefuist lichief duntison
Atenevit ere*n*t lioilh. orni avoit il poi*n*t dorgoilh
se vos enveissiez lorelhe. mut vos venist ag*ra*nt me*r*velhe
car maigre ert mut *et* degregue. *et* debla*n*cpoilh totemossue
Noire *et* polhue ert lapotri*n*e. se*m*bloit scorce denoirespine
Live*n*tres liert toz caoiz. nie*n*t ne ma*n*ioit *et* siert droiz
Lesongles avoit eleg*ra*nz. ele les retalloit azdanz
Lespiez maigres *et* decreuez. *et* p*ar* plusors lius mut nav*r*ez
Car ele nesgardoit despine. ca*n*t el aloit p*ar*legastine
Ans liert vis sonescie*n*t. *et* ele nifaloit nient
ca*n*t unespine li poindoit. uns despechiez i*us* lichaoit
Nefat aplai*n*dreli pechiez. do*n*t licors est sicastoiet
Nert me*r*velhe sele ert mossue. kara*n*te ans alat tote nue

(*Mary the Egyptian*, ed. by Dembowski, ll. 611—64)

Appendix 4

Saints' Lives

Saints' lives have been listed by saint, in alphabetical order. In each case, 'Mss' refers to manuscripts and 'Edn' refers to the edition of the Life referred to most frequently in my thesis and bibliography. This inventory is followed by a rough chronological list of the saints' lives mentioned.

1. Agnes

Author: Anon
Date: c. 1250
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 1553
Source: —
Edn: Denomy (1938)

2. Alban

Author: Matthew Paris
Date: 1230—40 (c. 1235?)
Mss: Dublin, Trinity College 177
Source: *Vita* by William, monk of St Albans
Edn: Harden (1968)

3. Alexis

Author: Anon
Date: 11th c. (second half)
Mss: Hildesheim, S. Godehards Bib., *s.n.*, Albani Psalter
Source: —
Edn: Storey (1968)

Author: Anon
Date: end 12th c./beginning of the 13th c.
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 1553
Carlisle, Chap
Source: —
Edn: Goddard Elliott (1983)

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c. (first half)
Mss: Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74
Paris, BN fr. 2162
Source: Latin *Vita* (BHL 286)
Edn: Stebbins (1971)

4. Andrew

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c. (first half)
Mss: Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74
Paris, Arsenal 3516
Source: *Passio sancti Andreae*
Gregory of Tours's *Miraculorum Liber* I, cap. xxxi
Edn: Baker (1916)

5. Audrey of Ely

Author: Marie (of Chatteris? of Barking?)
Date: end 13th c.
Mss: London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: *Vita Sanctae Ethelredae* by Thomas of Ely
Edn: Södergård (1955)

6. Barbara

Author: Anon
Date: end 13th c.
Mss: Brussels, Bib. Royale, MS 10295—304
Source: Golden Legend
Edn: Denomy (1939)

7. Catherine of Alexandria

Author: Clemence of Barking
Date: c. 1170 x 1200
Mss: Paris, BN, nouv. acq. fr. 4503
Paris, BN, f. fr. 23112
London, BL, Additional 70513
Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39
Source: *Vulgate* Latin version of the legend
Edn: Macbain (1964)

8. Christine

Author: Gautier de Coinci
Date: 1214 x 22 (c. 1218?)
Mss: Bib. Inguimbertine de Carpentras, MS 106
Paris, BN, f. fr. 817
Source: —
Edn: Collet (1999)

9. Dominic

Author: Anon (Dominican)
Date: 1256—59
Mss: Arras, Bib. Municipale, MS 307 (851)
Paris, BN, f. fr. 19531
Source: Latin *Vita* by Pierre Ferrand
Edn: Manning (1944)

10. Edmund of Canterbury

Author: Matthew Paris
Date: 1247 x 59 (1255—59?)
Mss: London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: *Vita* by Eustace (Canterbury monk) in London, BL, Cotton Julius D.VI
Edn: Baker (1929)

11. Edward the Confessor

Author: Nun of Barking
Date: 1163 x 89
Mss: London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: —
Edn: Södergård (1948)

12. Elizabeth of Hungary

Author: Rutebeuf
Date: 1258 x 1270
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 837
Paris, BN, fr. 1635
Source: —
Edn: Faral and Bastin (1960)

13. Euphrosine

Author: Anon (Benedictine monk?)
Date: end 12th c.
Mss: Brussels, Bib. Royale, 9229—30
Paris, Arsenal 5204
The Hague, Bib. Royale, MS Th. 389
Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74
Source: Latin *Vita*: A (see Hill, 1919; p. 163)
Edn: Hill (1919)

14. Eustace

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c. (first half)
Mss: New Haven (Conn.), Yale University, Beinecke Library, 395
Source: —
Edn: Petersen-Dyggve (1922)

15. Foy

Author: Simon of Walsingham
Date: bef. 1216 (1214—15?)
Mss: London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: Latin *Passio*
Edn: Baker (1940—41)

16. George

Author: Simund de Freine
Date: end 12th c.
Mss: Paris, BN f. fr. 902
Dublin, Trinity College, 312 (C.4.2)
Source: —
Edn: Matzke (1909)

17. Gilles

Author: Guillaume de Berneville
Date: last third of the 12th c.
Mss: Bib. Laurentienne de Florence, MS 99
London, BL, Harley 912
Source: *Vita sancti Aegidii*
Edn: Laurent (2003)

18. Gregory

Author: Anon
Date: 12th c.
Mss: London, BL, Additional 47663M
London, BL, Egerton 612
Tours, Bib. Municipale, MS 927 (Marmoutier 237)
Cambrai, Bib. Municipale, MS 812 (II)
Paris, BN, fr. 1545
Paris, Arsenal 3516
Paris, Arsenal 2527
Source: —
Edn: Sol (1977)

19. John the Almsgiver

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c. (early?)
Mss: Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.46
Source: *Vita* by Anastasius the Librarian
Edn: Urwin (1981)

20. Julian the Hospitaller

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c. (third quarter?)
Mss: Alençon, Bib. Municipale, MS 27
Arras, Bib. Municipale, MS 657
Paris, BN, fr. 183
Paris, BN, fr. 185
Paris, BN, fr. 413
Paris, BN, fr. 987
Paris, BN, fr. 1546
Paris, BN, fr. 6447
Paris, BN, fr. 13496
Paris, BN, fr. 17229
Paris, BN, fr. 23112
Paris, BN, nouv. acq. fr. 10128
Paris, BN, nouv. acq. fr. 23686
Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS 734
Lyon, Bib. Municipale, MS 867
Brussels, Bib. Royale, MS 10326
Brussels, Bib. Royale, MS 9225
London, BL, Additional 6524
London, BL, Additional 17275
Oxford, Queen's College, MS 305
Florence, Bib. Medicea-Laurenziana, MS 141
Tours, Bib. Municipale, MS 1015 (lost)
Cheltenham, Phillipps, MS 3660 (now privately owned)
Source: Old French *Vie* in octosyllabic verse (lost)
Edn: Swan (1977)

21. Juliana

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c. (first third?)
Mss: Brussels, Bib. Royale, MS 10295—304
Cheltenham, Phillipps MS 3668
Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74
Oxford, Bodleian, Douce 381
Paris, Arsenal 3516
Paris, BN, fr. 1807
Paris, BN, fr. 2094
Source: Latin *Vita*
Edn: Von Feilitzen (1883)

22. Lawrence

Author: Anon
Date: 12th c. (1140 x 70?)
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 19525
London, BL, Egerton 2710
Source: *Passio Polychronii* version of the Life
Edn: Russell (1976)

23. Margaret of Antioch

Author: Wace
Date: 1135—50
Mss: Tours, Bib. municipale 927; Paris, Bib. de l'Arsenal 3516; Troyes, Bib. municipale 1905
Source: Mombritius and Caligula versions of the *Vita*
Edn: Keller (1990)

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c.
Mss: London, BL, Additional 38664
Source: Mombritius version of the *Vita*
Edn: Reichl (1975)

24. Mary Magdalene

Author: Guillaume le Clerc
Date: 1180 x 91—1238
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 19525
London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: —
Edn: Reinsch (1880)

25. Mary the Egyptian

Author: Anon
Date: 12th c. (last quarter)
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 23112
Paris, BN, fr. 19525
Paris, Arsenal 3516
London, BL, Additional 36614
Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74
Oxford, Corpus Christi, MS 232
Manchester, John Rylands, MS French 6
Source: —
Edn: Dembowski (1977)

Author: Rutebeuf
Date: 1262—3
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 837
Paris, BN, fr. 1635
Source: *T* version of the *Vie* (see Dembowski, 1977)
Edn: Faral and Bastin (1960)

26. Modwenna

Author: Anon
Date: early 13th c. (c. 1230?)
Mss: Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 34
London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: *Vita s. Modvenne virginis* by Geoffrey, Abbot of Burton
Edn: Baker and Bell (1947)

27. Moses

Author: Anon
Date: 12th/13th c. (bef. 1215)
Mss: Brussels, Bib. Royale, MS 9229—30
Louvain, Bib. Universitaire, MS G 53
Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74
Paris, BN, fr. 23112
Paris, BN, fr. 24429
Paris, BN, fr. 25545
Paris, Arsenal 3516
Paris, Arsenal 5204
Paris, BN, MS 2039
The Hague, Bib. Royale, MS 389
Source: —
Edn: Cloetta (1887): in *Poème moral*

28. Nicholas

Author: Wace
Date: c. 1150
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 902
Paris, Arsenal 3516
Oxford, Bodleian, Douce 270 (21844)
Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 86 (1687)
Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39 (323)
Source: *Vita* by Johannes Diaconus
Mombritius version of the *Vita*
fusion of Mombritius and Falconius versions of the *Vita*
Translatio by Johannes Archidiaconus de Bari
Edn: Ronsjö (1942)

29. Osith

Author: Anon
Date: late 12th c.
Mss: London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: —
Edn: Baker (1911 and 1912)

30. Richard of Chichester

Author: Pierre d'Abernon de Fetcham/Pierre de Peckham
Date: c. 1276—77
Mss: London, BL, Additional 70513
Source: *Vita* by Ralph Bocking
Edn: Russell (1995)

31. Thaïs

Author: Anon
Date: 12th/13th c. (bef. 1215)
Mss: Brussels, Bib. Royale, MS 9229—30
Louvain, Bib. Universitaire, MS G 53
Oxford, Bodleian, Canonici, Miscellaneous 74
Paris, BN, fr. 23112
Paris, BN, fr. 24429
Paris, BN, fr. 25545
Paris, Arsenal 3516
Paris, Arsenal 5204
Paris, BN, MS 2039
The Hague, Bib. Royale, MS 389
Source: *Vitae Patrum*
Edn: Cloetta (1887): in *Poème moral*

Author: Anon
Date: 13th c.
Mss: Paris, BN, fr. 24862
London, BL, Harley 2253
Source: —
Edn: Perman (1961)

32. Thomas Becket

Author: Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence
Date: 1172—6
Mss: Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bib., Aug. 4°, 34.6
London, BL, Harley 270
London, BL, Cotton Domitian XI
London, BL, Additional 70513
London, BL, Additional 59616
London, Society for Antiquaries, 716
Oxford, Bodleian, Rawl. C.641 (12487)
Paris, BN, f. fr. 13513
Paris, BN, nouv. acq. fr. 13513
Source: Grim's *Vita sancti Thomæ martyris*
Vita by Guillaume of Canterbury
Edn: Walberg (1922)

Approximate Chronology of Saints' Lives

Date	Saint	Author
11th c.		
11th c. (second half)	Alexis	Anon
12th c.		
1135—50	Margaret of Antioch	Wace
12th c. (1140 x 70?)	Lawrence	Anon
c. 1150	Nicholas	Wace
1163 x 89	Edward the Confessor	Nun of Barking
c. 1170 x 1200	Catherine of Alexandria	Clemence of Barking
1172—6	Thomas Becket	Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence
last third of the 12th c.	Gilles	Guillaume de Berneville
1180 x 91—1238	Mary Magdalene	Guillaume le Clerc
12th c.	Gregory	Anon
12th c. (last quarter)	Mary the Egyptian	Anon
late 12th c.	Osith	Anon
end 12th c.	Euphrosine	Anon
end 12th c.	George	Simund de Freine
end 12th c./early 13th c.	Alexis	Anon
13th c.		
13th c. (early?)	John the Almsgiver	Anon
12th/13th c. (bef. 1215)	Moses	Anon
12th/13th c. (bef. 1215)	Thaïs	Anon
bef. 1216 (1214—15?)	Foy	Simon of Walsingham
1214 x 22 (c. 1218?)	Christine	Gautier de Coinci
13th c. (first third?)	Juliana	Anon
early 13th c. (c. 1230?)	Modwenna	Anon
1230—40 (c. 1235?)	Alban	Matthew Paris
c. 1250	Agnes	Anon
1247 x 59 (1255—59?)	Edmund of Canterbury	Matthew Paris
13th c. (first half)	Alexis	Anon
13th c. (first half)	Andrew	Anon
13th c. (first half)	Eustace	Anon
1256—59	Dominic	Anon

Date	Saint	Author
1258 x 1270	Elizabeth of Hungary	Rutebeuf
1262—3	Mary the Egyptian	Rutebeuf
13th c. (third quarter?)	Julian the Hospitaller	Anon
c. 1276—77	Richard of Chichester	Pierre d'Abernon de Fetcham/ Pierre de Peckham
13th c.	Margaret of Antioch	Anon
13th c.	Thaïs	Anon
end 13th c.	Audrey of Ely	Marie
end 13th c.	Barbara	Anon

Table 1

Texts and Authors in the Campsey MS (in order)

Saint	Author/Date	Form	Portrait Initial	Rubric	Locations/ Associations?
14th c. texts					
Elizabeth, Elizabeth of Hungary	Bozon; end 13th c.—early 14th c.		none	'la vie de seynte elizabeth'	Bozon probably from Nottingham (Steventon Priory?)
Panuce, Paphnutius	Bozon		none	'De seynte panuce'	
Paule le hermite	'frere boioun' (f. 8rb)		none	'La vie de seint paule le hermite'	
13th c. texts					
Thomas de Cantorbéry, Thomas Becket	Guernes de Pont Sainte Maxence (f. 48rb); 1172—76	6042? v. monorhymed alexandrines	none (possibly missing)	missing	Patronage from the abbess of Barking 'suer saint Thomas' claimed in Paris MS BN f. fr. 13513
Marie Magdalene	Guillaume le clerc (f. 55va); 1180 x 91—1238	713 v. octosyllabic couplets	none	'Ici comence le romanz de sainte marie magdalene'	Guillaume assoc. with Kenilworth Augustinian Priory, known to Alexander Stavensby, bp. Coventry and Lincoln (1224—38)
Edward, Edward the Confessor	Nun of Barking; 1163 x 89		f. 55va; plate 1	'Ici comence le romanz de saint edward rei'	Barking: probable connections with Henry II's court
Eadmund, Edmund of Canterbury	Matthew Paris; 1247 x 59	2020 v. octosyllabic couplets	none	'Ici comence la vie saint eadmund le confessur arcevesq*ue* de canterbire translate de latin en romanz par la requeste la cuntesse de aru*n*del.'	'translaté de latin en romanz par la requeste la cuntesse de aru*n*del' (f. 85vb)
Audree, Audrey/ Etheldreda of Ely	Marie, nun (f. 134a)	4620 v. octosyllabic couplets	f. 100va; plate 2	'Ici comence la vie seinte audree noneyne de ely.'	Possibly of Barking, Chatteris or Canonsleigh (Hugh de Northwold, abbot of Bury, then Ely, translates shrine 1252)
Osith of Chich, Aylesbury, Hereford	Anon; late 12th c.	1694 v. octosyllabic couplets	f. 134va; plate 3	'Ici comence la vie seinte osith virge e martire'	Alice de Vere (d. 1163), mother of Bp William de Vere of Hereford (author of a Latin version), becomes corrodian at Chich in her widowhood
Fey, Foy/Faith of	Symon de Walsingham	1242 v. octosyllabic	none	'Issi cumence la vie sainte	Horsham St Faith cult site, Bury St

Agen and Conques	(f. 148ra); Before 1216 (1214—15?)	couplets		fey. virgine et martire'	Edmunds (the author's monastery), Fitzwalter patronage (intermarried with de Valoignes, late 12th c.)
Modwenne, Modwenna of Britain	Anon; Early 13th c. (c. 1230?)	8692 v. monorhymed octosyllabic quatrains	f. 156vb; plate 4	'Ici comence le romanz de la vie seinte modwenne noneyne'	Based on Latin *vita* by Abbot Geoffrey of Burton (Richard of Bury becomes prior of Burton 1222)
Richard evesque de Cycestre Richard of Chichester	Pieres de fecham (f. 244va); 1276—77	2911 v. octosyllablic couplets (see Baker and Russell)	f. 222ra; plate 5	'Issi comence la vie seint richard evesq*ue* de cycestre'	Based on Bocking's *vita* of 1270, dedicated to Isabella of Arundel
Katerine, Catherine of Alexandria	Clemence of Barking; c.1170 x c.1200		f. 246ra; plate 6	'Ici come*n*ce la vie sainte katerine'	Assoc. with Barking? (and thus Henry II's court)

* The information in this table on the locations and associations of texts in the manuscript has been taken from Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, p. 171 (fig. 6).

Table 2

Types of Saints in the Oxford MS (in order)

Saint	Categorisation	Commemorations	Locations/Dates
Alexis	Married nobleman, ascetic	Originally culted by the Eastern Church; adopted by the Latin Church in the 10th c. (although known in the West before then). Feast 17 July	Rome and Edessa (in Syria), 5th c.
Moyses Moses the Black	Repentant sinner, monk, priest and martyr	Feast 28 Aug.	Ethiopia, c. 405
Thaïs	Repentant prostitute	Honoured in Greek menologies on 8th Oct. Not named in the Roman martyrology but known early on in the West. Feast 8 Oct.	Egypt, 4th c. ?
Juliane Juliana	Virgin martyr	Culted in England after Bede's Martyrology, where she was one of the most popular female saints (alongside Catherine and Margaret). Feast 16 Feb.	Cumae or Naples, 3rd/early 4th c.
Euphrosine	Virgin, nun and transvestite monk	Feast: Roman Church, 1 Jan.; Greek Church, 25 Sept; Carmelites, 11 Feb.	(408—70?)
Marie l'Egyptienne Mary of Egypt	Repentant prostitute, penitant	Popular in East and West. Iconographic tradition since at least the 12th c. in Chartres, Bourges and Auxerre. Feast 2 April (also sometimes 9/10 April)	Egypt and Palestine, 5th c.
Andrier l'apostle Andrew	Fisherman, apostle and martyr	Notable cult in the West. Feast universal from 6th c. Feast 30 Nov., translation 9 May	Palestine, 1st c. (d. c. 60).

Table 3

Texts in the Oxford MS (in order)

Saint	Author/ Date	Folio numbers	Form	Rubric	Hand
Alexis	13th c.	ff. 1r—19r	1043 v. in 58 monorhymed alexandrine laisses	incipit vita beati Allexis	Hand 1
Poème moral	13th c. (bef. 1215)	ff. 19r—62r	2320 v. in 580 alexandrine quatrains	prime distinctionis capitulum primum [see Appendix 2]	Hand 1
Juliane	13th c.	ff. 62r—84v (ff. 85r—86v are blank)	1300 v. in octosyllabic couplets (one couplet to a line on f. 62r, then spread over 2 lines in ff. 62v—84v)	ci *con*mence la vie sainte juliane	Hand 1
Euphrosine	Anon (poss. Benedictine monk); end 12th c.	ff. 87r—108v	1270 v. in 128 monorhymed alexandrine laisses	De sainte eufroysine [rubric in later, 14th c.? hand]	Hand 2
Marie l'Egyptienne	Beginning of 13th c.	ff. 109r—120r	1330 v. in octosyllabic couplets (one couplet to a line throughout)	de marie egyptienne [rubric in later, 14th c.? hand – same as above]	Hand 2
Andrier l'apostle	first half 13th c.	ff. 120r—131r	944 v. in octosyllabic couplets (couplets spread over 2 lines in ff. 120r—v, then placed in continuous text ff. 121r—131r)	la vie saint andrier lapostle	Hand 1
Li Ver del juïse	c.1122—56 (1140?)	ff. 131r—138r	415 v. sermon in assonanced alexandrines (monorhyme on *ie*?)	li ver del iuise	Hand 1

Table 4

Texts and Authors in the Arsenal Manuscript (in order).

Text	Author	Form	Illumination	Rubric
Calendar (with mensual health advice)				
Table of dominical letters (1268—1367)				
Table of contents				
L'Histoire sainte (canonical and apocryphal stories from the 13thc. *Bible Anonyme*, *La Passion des Jongleurs* and the *Bible* by Hermann de Valenciennes)	Hermann de Valenciennes	variable: octosyllabic couplets and decasyllabic laisses (end rhymes in groups of 9—13 or thereabouts)	ff. 4r, 4v, 5r [3], 5v [2], 14r, missing images: f. 6v, 9v, 11v, 38r, 39r, 40v [2], 41v [2], 47v	(missing beginning) Ci manga eve lefruit de vee par le greis del sathanas
Li regres Nostre Dame	Huon le Roi de Cambrai	octosyllables: couplets and extended rhyme	missing images: 50v	Or oies le regret que nostre dame fist ale crois
La Conception Nostre Dame	Wace	octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 52r	Or ores de la mort nostre dame (f. 51v)
Paraphrase of the Psalm **Eructavit** (44)	attd. Adam de Perseigne	octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 53v	missing
Vie de Marie Madeleine		prose (decasyllables?)	missing images: 57r	Ore orez de la madelaine
Passion de saint Jean l'Evangéliste John the Evangelist		prose	missing images: 58r, 60v	missing?
De saint Jacques le Majeur		prose		or ores de s[...] (f. 60v)
Passion de saint Jean Baptiste John the Baptist		prose	missing images: 63v	Ci cumence la passion S. Johan baptiste li apostle (f. 63v)
Passion de saint Piere Peter		prose	missing images: f. 65r	missing?
Passion de saint Paul		prose	missing images: f. 66r	missing?
Passion de saint André Andrew		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 67r	or ores de saint andrieu
Vie de saint Nicholas	Wace	octosyllabic couplets	f. 69v (image of the saint, seated with his crosier)	Chi comenche li livres de saint Nicolay
Vie de saint Jean Chrysostome John Chrysostom	Renaut	octosyllabic couplets	f. 73v (image of the saint seated before a devil with a pen? and board between them)	Ore dirons de saint johan bouche dor
La Vengeance de Jésus Christ		alexandrines		apres vient la venganche [...] (f. 75v)

Vie de saint Julien Julian the Hospitaller	Rogier	octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 84r	missing?
Le Voyage de saint Brendan	Benedeit	octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 96r	missing?
Vie du Pape saint Grégoire (apocryphal) Pope Gregory		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 100v	Or orres de saint grigoire (f. 100v)
Poème Moral: Vie de saint Moyses le noir Moses the Black		alexandrine quatrains		moisee le mourdrisseur (later 14thc. hand)
Poème Moral: Vie de sainte Thaïs		alexandrine quatrains	missing images: 109v	none (missing?)
Vie de sainte Marie l'Egyptienne Mary the Egyptian		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 113v	missing?
Vie de sainte Julienne Juliana		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 117v	missing?
Vie de sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie Catherine of Alexandria		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 121r	missing?
Vie de sainte Marguerite Margaret	Wace	octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 125r	missing?
Le Jongleur de Nostre Dame		octosyllabic couplets	f. 127r, bottom left margin. The Virgin and Christ child watch as an angel descends from heaven; a tumbler does back-flips in the foreground.	Or orres del tumbeor nostre dame sainte marie
Part of the chapter 'd'envie' in the **Enseignement des Princes**	Robert de Blois	octosyllabic couplets		Or ores de jonas *et* de la balaine
Poèmes religieux	Robert de Blois	octosyllabic couplets		
De Le Abbesse		octosyllabic couplets		Or orres de le abeesse q*ue* li deables empraigna
Prayer		octosyllabic couplets		Ore orres les proierres
Miracle de l'image qui fut la caution d'un prêt		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 132v	Del povre clerc q*ui* m*ou*lt avoit este rices *et* mist le crucefis en pleges por lui al juis
Le Conte de la femme chaste convoitée par son beau-frère		octosyllabic couplets		De la sainte empereris q*ui* Garissoit les lieprous

Du Prud'homme		octosyllabic couplets		none
De Saint Hippolyte		octosyllabic couplets		De celui aq*ui* nostre dame enta la q*ui*sse el cors et S. Ypolites laporta
Del Diable qui se fit clerc et devin		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 137r	missing?
Le Dit de l'Unicorne		octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 139v	missing?
Le Débat de l'âme et du corps		hexasyllabic couplets	missing images: 140v	[...] cors *et* del arme
Le Lucidaire	Gillebert de Cambres	octosyllabic couplets		Chi comenche li lucidaires ki p*ar*ole del Jugement : *et* de m*oul*t dautres choses
Les Quinze Signes du jugement dernier		alexandrine laisses	f. 154v The Last Judgement (full page illumination)	Or ores de jugem*ent et* des .xv. signes
La Table de la Mappemonde		prose	f. 157r, diagram of the firmament; f. 157v, diagrams of the planets/stars and illustration of eclipse; f. 158v, geographic diagram of the 'three parts' of the world in their 'chercle de terre'.	Or orres le table de la mape monde
L'Image du monde	Gossuin de Metz	octosyllabic couplets	f. 164v and 165r, diagrams illustrating the position, shape etc. of the world; f. 165v, 'geographical' diagrams; f. 171v and 172r, astrological diagrams; f. 172v, 173r, 173v, illustrations of eclipse; f. 179r, temporal and astrological diagrams (full page); f. 179v, diagram with calendar/days of the week and Christian glosses.	Chi comenche lymage dou monde

La Nature du temps		octosyllabic couplets	f. 180v, diagram with the names of great philosophers	Les natures del tans si *com*me li sage anchien le nos de.mostrent. Si cum Ille virent. *et* p*ro*verent en lor tans. p*or* anees
Le Livre de la philosophie et de moralité	Alart de Cambrai	octosyllabic couplets		Ichi *com*menche li livres estrais de philosophie *et* de moralite
Le Bestiaire	Pierre de Beauvais	prose	see list below	Chi comenche li livres des natures des beste
Le Lapidaire	Marbode	prose		Chi *com*m*en*ce li lapidaires q*ui* raconte les vertus des p*re*ciouses pierres. Chi sont escrit li no*n* des .xii. p*ri*ncipals pieres. Jagonce. Grenas. Sardes. tot est un topace. esmeraude. Rubins. escarboncle saffirs. Jaspes. ligures acate. amatiste. crisolite oniche.beril
Le Lapidaire des pierres précieuses gravées		prose		Chi *com*mence la table de p*re*ciouses pierres. de celes pierres q*ui* sont de taille *et* devise la v*er*tu des tailles
Le Roman de Judas Machabée	Gautier de Belleperche	octosyllabic couplets	f. 217v image of knights on horseback in identical dress (in 5 full circles with 2 half circles depicting burning men at arms and a burning castle). Full page illumination.	Ci comence le livere machabeus ke est bone a oier
Le Roman des Sept Sages		prose	missing images: 273v	missing?
La Chronique du pseudo-Turpin		prose	f. 284r image of a king (presumably Charlemagne) flanked by 2 knights.	none
L'Enseignement des princes; L'Honneur des dames; Le Chastoiement des dames; La Chanson d'Amors	Robert de Blois	octosyllabic couplets		none (although titles of poems given in 14th c. hand in top margin of each page; an exception to this is f. 292v, which has a red integrated rubric)

La Chronique française abrégée des rois de France	Anonyme de Béthune	prose		Chi puet ki set lire oir Q*ui* li roi furent q*ui* franche ont ten*us et* dont il vi*n*dre*nt et* coment il morurent *et* les nons des t*i*res *com*ment il sont cangies *et* de troies *et* dengleterre de q*ue*l gent il fu primes pueples
Chronique des ducs de Normandie	Anonyme de Béthune	prose		none
De Venus		variable (decasyllabic?)	missing images: 315r and 319r	Devenus la [...] *et* del vrai amant q*ui* vint[...acort le dieu damor por deraisnier samie]
De Cristal et de Clarie		octosyllabic couplets		Chi comence li livres de cristal et de clarie
Le Lai de Mélion		octosyllabic couplets		Chi come*n*che melion
Le Lai du trot		octosyllabic couplets		Ore ores le lai del trot (f. 344r); Chi *comen*ce li lay del trot
Le Lai d'Aristote	Henri d'Andeli	octosyllabic couplets	missing images: 345r	missing?
Chante Pleure		alexandrine laisses		Or ores de le chante pleure
Le Doctrinal Sauvage	Sauvage d'Arras	alexandrine laisses		Or ores de doctrinal le sauvage
Le Dit des droits	Clerc de Vaudoy	octosyllables		Chi comence li dit des drois
Beginning of **Lettre d'Hippocrate**		prose		Chi *com*mence li livres de fisique
Le Roman de Reinbert		prose		none (title in top margin in 14th c. hand reads: Roman du neveu de lEmpereor Theodose

Illuminations in the Bestiary ('de la nature des bestes'):

f. 198v, image of 2 lions, one resuscitating its young; f. 199r [2], pictures of the 'antula' and the 'serre'; 199v [3], pictures of fire, the 'caladres' bird, and the 'wivre'; f. 200r [3], pictures of the pelican, tiger and crane ('grue'); f. 200v [3], pictures of the 'woutre', the 'arondes' birds, and the 'volcoir'; f. 201r [3], pictures of the 'aspis', 'trisnon', and 'corbel'; f. 201v [3], pictures of the 'arpie', lousegnol', and 'espesch'?; f. 202r [2], pictures of the 'paorj' and the 'alerions'; f. 202v [3], pictures of the eagle, bat and the sirens; f. 203r [3], pictures of the 'hupe', Argus the cowherd and the phoenix; f. 203v [3], pictures of the 'papegais', ants, and ostrich; f. 204 [2], images of hedgehogs the 'ybex' bird; f. 204v [3], the 'goupils'/'golpis', the spider and the fly, and the 'basile cok'; f. 205r [2], the bird-tree and the 'tiris' serpent; f. 205v [3], the unicorn, griffin, and 'castoires'; f. 206r [3], the 'hierye' (hyena?), 'ulica' bird, and crocodile; f. 206v [3], the goat, the 'centicore', and wild asses; f. 207r [3], the 'signes' (monkeys?), 'chines' (swan) and the panther; f. 207v image of the 'pertois' bird; f. 208r [3], pictures of the 'covie', the 'assida' bird, and the 'tortre' bird; f. 208v [2], the 'chers' (stag?) and salamander; f. 209r [2], the 'colons' and the dragon and tree of Judea; f. 209v, the elephant; f. 210r [2], Amon the prophet and the wolf; f. 210v [2], the 'essinus' fish and Sagittarius and the wild man; f. 211r, man in the natural world; f. 211v [2], the vulture, and the 'merle' bird; f. 212r [2], the 'escouffles' and the 'muscaliet'; f. 212v, an indian bird. (for rubrics see Guggenbühl pp. 292—4)

For the list of titles in the contents page of the manuscript see Guggenbühl's edition of the *Table de matières*, pp. 120—24.

Plates

plate 1. St Edward the Confessor, in London, BL, Additional 70513 (f. 55va).

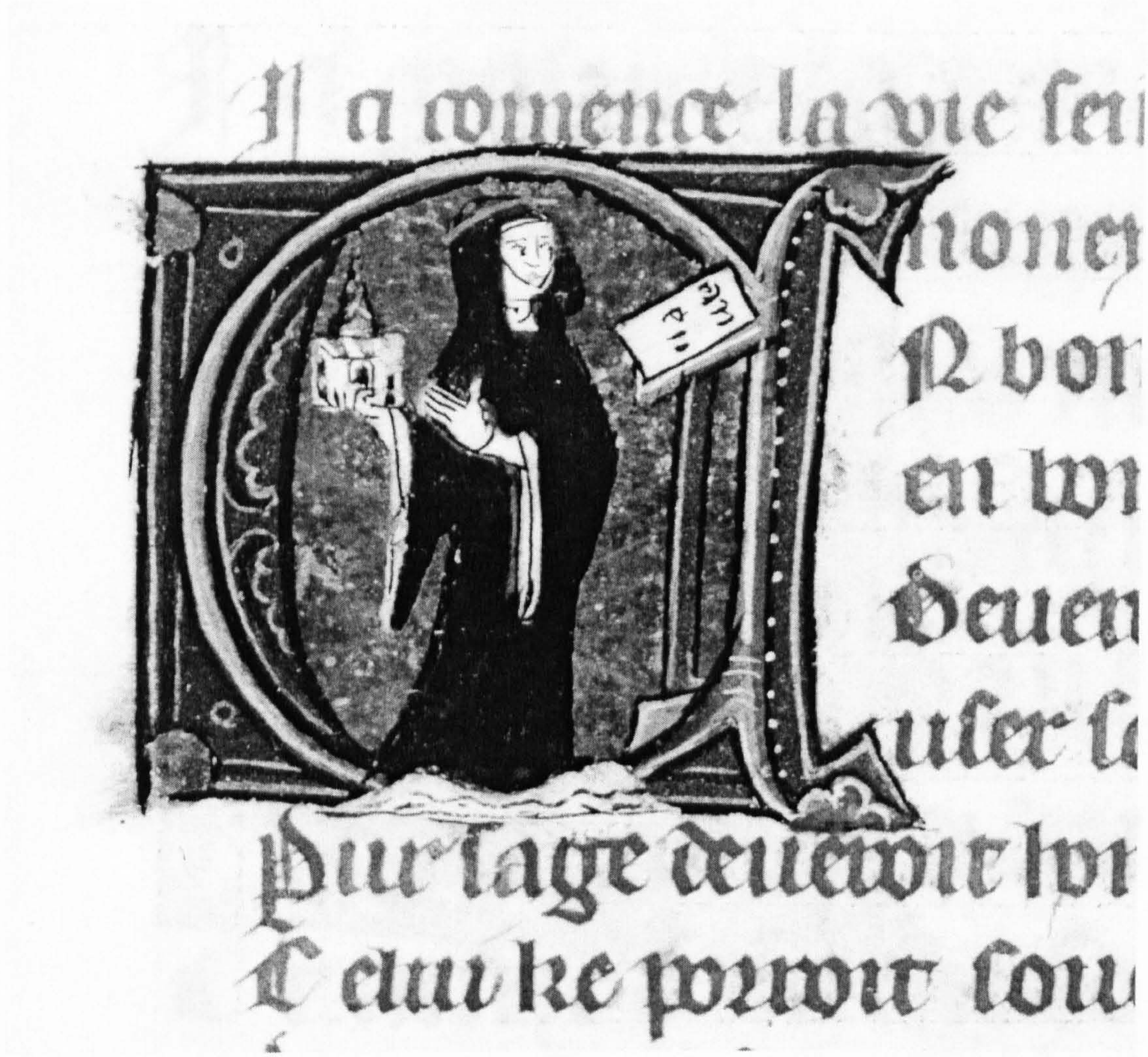

plate 2. St Audrey of Ely, in London, BL, Additional 70513 (f. 100va).

plate 3. St Osith, in London, BL, Additional 70513 (f. 134va).

plate 4. St Modwenna, in London, BL, Additional 70513 (f. 156vb).

plate 5. St Richard of Chichester, in London, BL, Additional 70513 (f. 222ra).

plate 6. St Catherine of Alexandria, in London, BL, Additional 70513 (f. 246ra).

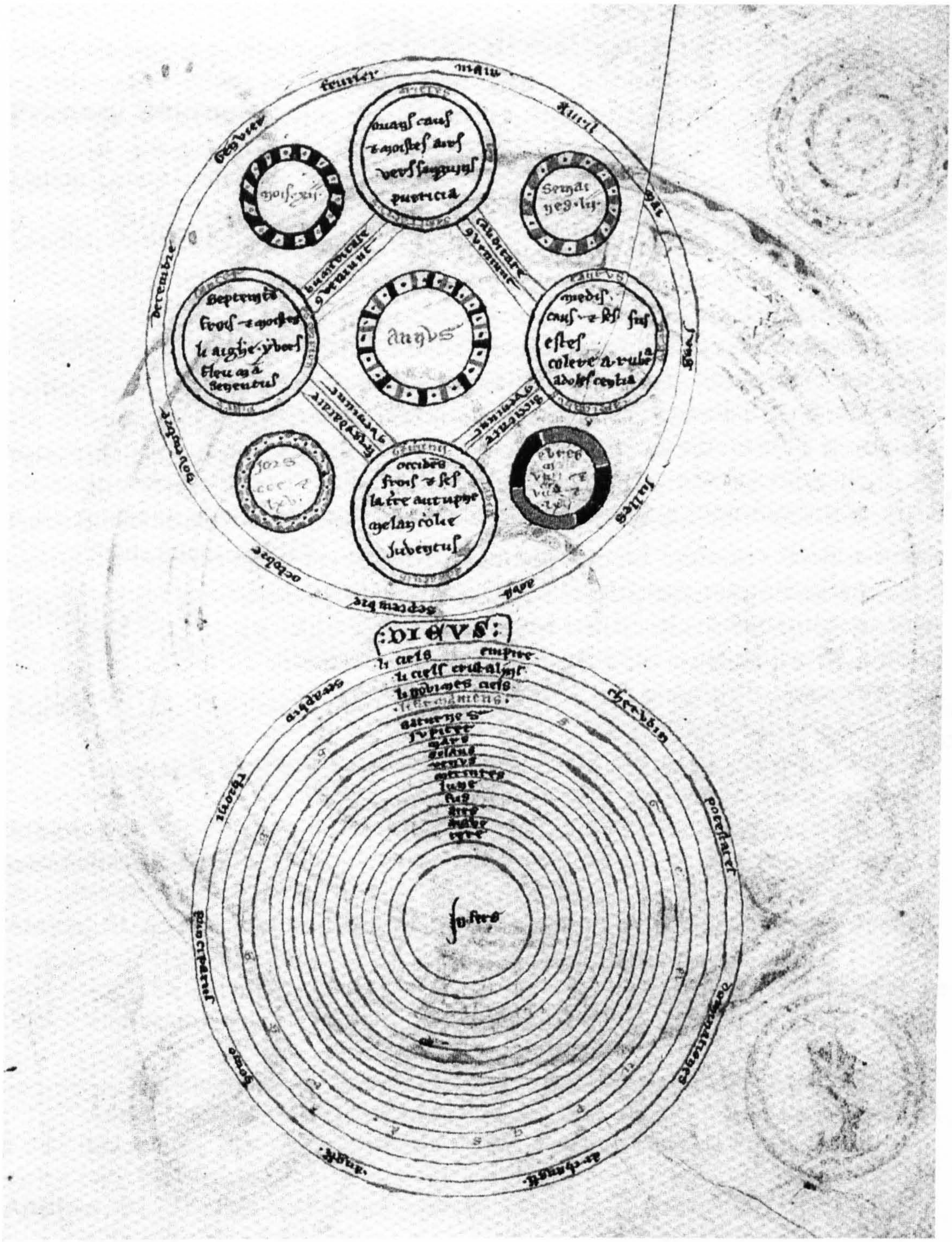

plate 7. Illustrations to *L'Image du monde* in Paris, Arsenal 3516 (f. 179r). A schematic depiction of the year is situated in the upper section of the page. The diagram in the lower section of the folio represents the elemental, planetary and celestial spheres extending from hell (in the centre) to God (at the top).

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